El futuro ya está aquí: A Comparative Analysis of

Punk Culture in Spain and Mexico

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the punk genre's evolution into commercial mainstream music in Spain and Mexico. It looks at how this evolution altered both the aesthetic and gesture of the genre. This evolution can be seen by examining four bands that followed similar musical and commercial trajectories. In Spain, Kaka de Luxe and Radio Futura; in Mexico, Size and Ritmo Peligroso. Since punk music's gesture is both visceral and political, various methods of suppressing or containing the punk gesture arise. For both Spain and Mexico, containing the punk gesture was a matter of government censorship in the early years of punk. By the late 1980s, neoliberalism, global tastes, and capitalist interests controlled the punk gesture more than governmental crackdown.

The thesis concludes that while the punk gesture was contained for both political and economic reasons during the 1980s, the resurgence of the punk gesture in the 1990s is evidence of the genre's resilience in a capitalist and hegemonic environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest thanks to Brian Price for helping me through the process of writing this thesis, as well as being a great mentor and friend for all these years. I would not be at this point without his help and guidance. I also wish to express thanks to Lin Sherman, Erik Larson, Gregory Stallings, Dale Pratt, and David Laraway for being mentors and friends in their own right. They have all played an important hand in molding me into the scholar that I have become. I want to thank everyone in the Spanish and Portuguese department for their continued friendship and camaraderie through the years. I especially want to thank all of my colleagues who were my good friends through these last two years: Zach, Anthony, Gina, Cai, Asa, Jeremy, and Jeannette. I will miss you all!

To Mom, Brooke, Brinton, Whitney, Claire, Phil: thank you for being there for me always. I love you all deeply. To Thomas, Daniel, Sara, Lydia, James, Isaac, Evie, Nicholas, Peter, Jane, Ellie, and Ellowyn: I love my niblings too! The world is an exciting place. Keep learning about it always.

To my wife Aylea: thank you for putting up with my idiosyncrasies while I was writing this monster. You have supported me since the beginning, and you continue to encourage me to reach high. Your praise for me helped me feel better when I was not sure about this project. I love you.

And to Dad, who bought me my first guitar and always encouraged me to shine as a performer: thanks for helping me both on this side of the veil and on the other side. Ándale.

Introduction

Why is punk important? When I began investigating for this thesis, I asked myself this particular question on multiple occasions. What I found was that trying to defend the relativity of punk is nearly impossible. Punk music is polarizing. People either love it or hate it, and trying to convince one or the other group of its importance is either moot or anathema. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is not to defend the importance of punk, but to interrogate punk's influence and the forces that have influenced punk in Spain and Mexico. This transatlantic approach to punk *en Español* offers two things unique to cultural studies: first, it compares the evolution of the genre in two cultures and national identities that share multiple similarities. Second, it offers a closer look at the effect globalization had on punk as musicians transitioned from late 1970s post punk into 1980s pop rock and beyond.

The methods of cultural production over the last century have changed dramatically, and these changes have a significant impact in how people understand themselves and the world around them. More importantly, cultural production is not created in a vacuum. Cultural and artistic influences cross over and mix together constantly. "High art" (art produced by distinguished institutions and promoted by the upper class) and "low art" (non-institutional, or folk) now occupy similar spaces and are distributed *en masse* to the world. A high school student from central Utah can now listen to the entirety of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* or listen to the newest Kanye West album, *Kids See Ghosts* (2018) on an iPhone. What we consume in media speaks volumes about our identity. It also demonstrates what types of values we place on art, whether it be from high institution or from folk backgrounds. Simon Frith points this out in his book *Performing Rites*, which reminded me of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* argument that

accrued cultural capital defines high culture. Frith argues that the same occurs with low culture as well, and that, "A similar use of accumulated knowledge and discriminatory skill is apparent in low cultural forms and has the same hierarchical effect" (9). Moreover, Frith argues that any form of cultural production must have a value ascribed to it in order to maintain its relevance beyond its initial inception (47-49). Whether the product has "taste" (to use the sociological term from Bourdieu) is not as important as whether the product has inherent value for the consumer. This is especially true when it comes to music. A song that others may think is melodramatic may hold great meaning to an individual who identifies with the sentiments of that song. The pedagogical impact that these values have on future artists influences the practice and performance of the next musical iteration.

Punk is one of those cultural productions that molded generations of musicians, authors, journalists, and artists. An increasing body of work in academia focuses on punk's history and impact in today's cultural production. New publications come out now on a yearly basis about the genre's effect in the international music scene as well. Apart from some of the more influential works like *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond* (1994) by Jon Savage or *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (1996) by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, new works are expanding these and other seminal texts to form a vast body of research and analysis. Some of the works that are more recent that are not already included in the bibliography of this thesis are James Greene's *Brave Punk World: The International Rock Underground from Alerta Roja to Z-Off* (2017), David Ensminger's *The Politics of Punk* (2016), Zack Furness' *Punkademics* (2012), Stephen Duncombe's *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (2011), Simon Reynolds' *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984*, Craig O'Hara's *The Philosophy of Punk* (2001), and article compilations like *Fight Back: Punk,*

Politics and Resistance (2017) or *Punk Pedagogies: Music, Culture and Learning* (2017). All of these works have come out in the last twenty years. This expanding archive attests to punk's viability as a literary, musical, and cultural subject to be analyzed. So, the question of this thesis is not whether punk is important but, more specifically, *how* punk is important–specifically in a Hispanic context.

The problem with examining how punk is important in a Hispanic context is the breadth of approaches to the subject. Rather than focus on a broad survey of the history of punk in Spain and Mexico, I will focus on the evolution of four bands with unique approaches to the interpretation of Punk culture: Kaka de Luxe, Radio Futura, Size, and Ritmo Peligroso. Punk as a history is rather sprawling and convoluted at points. Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* confirms that, since the book looks primarily at the rise of the most influential punk group, The Sex Pistols, and still packs a whopping 541 pages without notes and appendices. Looking at the aforementioned Spanish and Mexican bands, an overview can be made that examines some of the changes and obstacles that were instrumental to punk's nativity, rise, and decline. These bands' musical journeys highlight problems and advantages unique to each historical context.

The primary question that needs examination in this introduction is: what is punk? As sociologist David Beers explains, "One of the immediate problems that we are faced with in trying to define punk is that a key feature of the movement is its discomfort with labels, categories, and boundaries. As such, it is a movement that is hard to tie down to a clearly defined set of characteristics with discrete boundaries" (21). This discomfort with labels comes from animosity against systems and institutions that invent those labels: transnational record companies, music schools, and music journalism–in other words, institutions of high art. These are perceived as the enemy to the freedom that punk yearns to achieve. Since labels are

prohibitive to punk, the question may better work as, "what is *not* punk?" What is not punk are the products and practices that come from established institutions. In the first two chapters of this thesis, established institution comes in the form of politics and cultural hegemony. In the last chapter, institution takes the form of neoliberalism and the global market. All of these established institutions pose a perceived external threat to punk's authenticity.

The punk genre tries to contain itself with definitions of what constitute authenticity. An imagined community like the punk subculture ascribes the greatest significance to the authentic in almost every aspect of life: dress, hairstyle, daily routine, and media consumption. It is by these signs of consumption and appearance that punks identify themselves. While it is true that punk has discomfort with labels and discrete borders as Beers explains, punk has to maintain a certain level of discrimination to maintain itself as a genre. This generates conflict between the subcultural community and the mainstream that attempts to repackage subculture into appealing mainstream forms. This issue will be seen with the bands examined in this thesis, since many of them stepped away from their punk roots and entered into the commercial music market. A band's rejection of the underground punk community leads to a rejection by the same, claiming that said band sold out to commercial interests.

The problem here is that the clash between authentic and inauthentic forms of punk is almost entirely subjective. Rather than there being a codified system that determines true punk (a concept of the establishment), punks are anarchically free to determine the genre. This leads to many discussions in the community over what is "phony" and what is authentic. Hundreds of magazines and fanzines[1] debate, dissect, and argue over this realm of authentic music in punk,

[1] A clandestine type of magazine that is generated and circulated by fans of any particular genre or subject.

citing everything from the history of the band to the types of themes talked about in their songs to even what band members wear from day to day. This generates a complicated narrative that creates more confusion than understanding about what authenticity means. Furthermore, boundaries between what is punk and what is not punk are blurred constantly as artists combine, destroy, and reinvent their work. In the last two decades, for example, emo punk, thrash, and techno punk have emerged from other musical traditions that further problematize the idea of authenticity along aesthetic boundaries.

To codify authenticity in punk in its entirety is far too broad a subject for this thesis, and is a task best left to sociology. For the sake of brevity and cohesion between the three chapters, two elements are needed for authenticity in punk music: the gesture[2] and the aesthetic. The punk aesthetic is the appearance of punk while the punk gesture is the meaning behind the actions and styles. Dick Hebdige was one of the first academics to study the punk aesthetic and its gesture. In his 1979 book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Hebdige's interrogation of the objects, paraphernalia, and overall performance of the genre lead him to the thesis that punk has to do with subversion of the mainstream. As he states in the introduction:

> The tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture–in the styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning. On the one hand, they warn the 'straight' world in advance of a sinister presence–the presence of difference–and draw down upon themselves vague suspicions,

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[2] This particular use of the term "gesture" comes from Michel Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*. He defines neoliberal power moves as gestures that reveal the true meanings of the rich and powerful. He turns this idea on its head to explain that power within the proletariat can also manifest itself in gesture. These gestures can oftentimes take the form of violence, like throwing a brick through a storefront window to punctuate dissatisfaction with the economy. However, violence is not the only type of gesture. Peaceful demonstration, hunger strikes, or walkouts all carry biopolitical meaning that results in a gesture.

> uneasy laughter, 'white and dumb rages.' On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons, those who use them as words or as curses, these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value. (2-3)

What Hebdige explains in this quote is the repurposing of utilitarian objects like a safety pin into objects that carry new meanings apart from their original purpose. This is classic subversion, and it represents a gesture against hegemonic cultural norms that would dictate a safety pin's use otherwise. Subverting the original purpose of something like a safety pin revolts against society's constructed determinants. Even using a safety pin to hold together clothes subverts its original use, as the safety pin replaces regular stitching and seam work. The safety pin is meant to be temporary, but in this context, it is permanent and a central focus. Seams and stitches are meant to conceal and hide imperfections. A jean jacket that is safety pinned together exposes those imperfections for all to see. This is the punk gesture, provoking an uncomfortable response amongst the mainstream by contrasting society's everyday function.

Gestures like these are nothing new, nor were they historically restricted to the time of punk. The punk gesture and the rock gesture, for instance, share many similarities. Both have a drive for rebellion against authority. Moreover, the gesture crossed cultural and national boundaries. The rock gesture was not purely Anglo-centric. For instance, Eric Zolov describes the idea of "desmadre" in *Refried Elvis* as a rebellion against Mexico's dominant norms for correct behavior through rock and roll. As Zolov explains:

> An offensive, lower-class slang word, *desmadre* expresses the notion of social chaos introduced by the literal 'unmothering' of a person or situation. This stands in antithesis to that other Mexican phrase, buenas costumbres, which encapsulates all that is proper and correct–" family values," as we might say in the United States. (27)

The rock gesture is that "desmadre" that comes from rupturing the societal norms. In other words, "desmadre" comprises the meanings behind certain conventions and attitudes in rock music that may stand in direct contrast to society's conventions and attitudes. The adage "sex, drugs, and rock n' roll" is instructive in this regard. The themes of sexuality and drug use within rock music push the boundaries of what is acceptable in moral or polite society. Rock music has been pushing the boundaries of these taboos for years. Take, for example, Sonny Fisher's "Rockin' and a Rollin'" (1955):

> Well I love my baby and I love her fine
> She gives me kisses that taste so fine
> Makes me wanna roll it, roll it, roll it
> Makes me wanna rock it, rock it, rock it
> Rockin' and a-rollin', baby all night long

The subtle innuendo behind the very term "rock and roll" is that of sexual intercourse. While the reference is obvious, it is not quite so grotesque that it would scandalize a 1950s audience too much. Compare that to Led Zeppelin's "The Lemon Song" (1969):

> Squeeze me baby, 'till the juice runs down my leg
> The way you squeeze my lemon, I
> I'm gonna fall right out of bed, bed, bed, bed, yeah![3]

The innuendo here is far more overt. Regardless, these examples and many more that vary between subtle and overt demonstrate how the rock and punk gestures push the boundaries of

[3] Ironically, this particular track from *Led Zeppelin II* (1969) plagiarizes from two different songs: Robert Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues" (1937) and Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" (1964). Wolf later filed a lawsuit against the band for royalties to the song. This indicates that the rock gesture's progenitor is the primarily the blues.

what is acceptable. The violation of standards set either by religion, government, or any other institution is what separates the aesthetic from the gesture. There have been plenty of bands and solo artists that have adopted the aesthetic of a particular genre and have veered away from violating norms[4].

What differentiates the rock gesture and the punk gesture is punk's political attitude. From rock music's earliest years, politics played a part in what many artists composed. In the 1960s for example, songs like Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" (1967) protested the Vietnam War. The problem was that while artists began writing more politically-charged tunes, politics was not the main driving force behind the rock gesture. By the late 1960s, the predominant ideologies of the rock gesture were peace and free love, both of which were rather passive in their performance. Music festivals like the Woodstock Music & Art Fair in 1969 or the Avándaro Music Festival in 1971 in Mexico epitomized this passivity in the practice of rock. Carlos Monsiváis, in his chronicle *Amor perdido*, even alluded to the failure of rock music to mobilize the rising generation to political consciousness in Mexico: "Agotados, rendidos, los de la Onda abandonan Avándaro para ver acto seguido el exterminio de su utopía" (253). While I do not share in Monsivais' pessimism about rock's politics, his observation indicates that there was a lack of allegiance to the ideals espoused in rock music to change the world. The students massacred at Tlatelolco in 1968 were not hippies or anything like that. They were regular students who protested the abuses of government. Nothing like that ever occurred at the Avándaro music festival in 1971.

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[4] Christian rock is the genre that comes to mind here. But steering clear of social taboos is not an exclusive hallmark pertaining to this one type of musical style. Kid pop artists like early Miley Cyrus, Justin Bieber, and Taylor Swift composed songs that avoided adult subject matter, as the target audience is highly impressionable youth.

Punk was not interested in following the hippie movement's peace and love ideology. Punk's brand of politics was aggressive from the get-go. In Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming*, many of the progenitors of punk felt disillusioned with the promises of the previous generation. The claims of transcending societal norms through hallucinogens or by wearing bohemian fashions smacked of insincerity to early punks who wanted to hard boil the rock gesture down into something that could truly push boundaries without becoming ideologically flaccid:

> England wasn't free and easy: it was repressed and horrible. Both felt that the claims of hippie culture to have changed the world were false; it was just window dressing, like the façades so quickly erected and demolished in consumer enclaves like Oxford Street. Consider the music of the time – then called 'Rock' in a bid for respectability. What a pompous, middle-class facsimile of the anarchy that was fifties Rock'n'Roll! The music industry was now in control and conning everyone: how could that industry's 'Rock' retain any trace of Rock'n'Roll's original teenage revolt? (9)

Punks wanted to be confrontational and brash with politics, and that approach resonated with many musicians. They did not want to buy into the political machine that had devoured the countercultural movements of the late 1960s. When the Sex Pistols released their first album *Never Mind the Bollocks* in October 1977, the revolt against this passivity became vinyl. "God Save the Queen" pushed against England's reverence for the royal family and Queen Elizabeth's upcoming Jubilee year: "God save the Queen, She ain't no human being, And there's no future, and England's dreaming!" The Sex Pistols were not the only punk band that wrote scathing diatribes against political and popular figures of their time: The Damned, Buzzcocks, The Clash, and The Vibrators all contributed to the punk gesture of anarchy and resistance to authority in the UK. From there, punk musicians started appearing across the globe almost instantaneously,

thanks to advances in technology with radio and record distribution. It was less than a few months after *Never Mind the Bollocks* came out that Spanish band Kaka de Luxe released their own self-titled album. A year later, Mexican punk bands Ritmo Peligroso and Size started performing. The punk gesture was loud and clear, visceral and virile. It manifested itself in aesthetic choices that became a codification of punk, which ultimately was the musical style's greatest weakness.

The punk aesthetic runs independent of the punk gesture. Aesthetic is what constitutes the "look" of the genre: the hairstyles, the clothing, the musical conventions that indicate a song as being punk-ish. While gesture may impact the way in which the aesthetic evolves, aesthetics can be manipulated outside of any particular gesture. For example, a teenager who styles his hair into a mowhawk may do it just because it "looks cool" and not because the mowhawk represents any kind of violent subversion of style. Aesthetic may carry with it a specific meaning or gesture, but sometimes the meanings can be erased. Aesthetic can change according to market trends and social determinations. Even as early as 1977, the market trends that drew many record labels to sign punk bands were already recognizing the value of making punk music and style a commodity. Savage again points this out: "All [of the various new punk bands] had something to recommend them, yet their appearance showed how Punk's original rigor and genuine novelty were already being dissipated by commercial interests" (302). As will be seen in the first two chapters, the codification of the punk aesthetic into a commodity happened because of the need for bands to make money. The only way for these bands to sustain their presence artistically was to commercialize. While political pressures in the past may have put a halt to subculture in Mexico or Spain via governmental institution, economic pressures exerted their power over the artistic directions bands decided to take. Some musicians were ephemeral flashes in the pan.

Others maintained a long career of success. The difference in the two groups often occurs at the intersection of maintaining the punk gesture versus containing the punk gesture and repurposing it.

This is not to say that a loss of the punk gesture will completely gut any element of punk. To the contrary, the punk aesthetic lives on because it has become commercialized so well. Hot Topic, Too Fast, and American Apparel generate millions of dollars in annual revenue by exploiting punk style. Whether or not the consumers are aware of the possible gestures behind clothing that displays things like anarchy symbols or safety pins is beside the point: punk sells as a commodity, and the gesture is irrelevant. While this type of consumerism may be depressing to the "authentic" punk community, there is a silver lining. New generations of musicians and artists rise from these pedagogical commodities to induce rebirths of the genre.

At this point, I want to give a brief overview of the structure of this thesis. In the first chapter I look at how historical and cultural events in Spain led to the period of rapid democratization in Spain called *la transición*. This increase in democracy and free speech permitted artists and musicians to engage in the punk genre. In the second chapter, I look at Mexico's historical background at the inception of the punk scene. I look specifically at how governmental crackdowns, corruption, and social spaces contributed to the creation of the punk subculture. In the third and concluding chapter, I will explain how the Spanish and Mexican punk movements set the stage for the Spanish Rock Boom of the 1990s, a time in Hispanic popular music where rock took center stage once again with newfound purpose and an unprecedented audience.

Chapter 1

"Spain, Transition, and *La Movida*"

This chapter will connect various historical and political changes that took place just before punk really began in Spain. It will explain the concept of containing the punk gesture. The first obstacle for the punk gesture was a history of limited freedom of expression under the conservative Falangist government. Francisco Franco's control over what could or could not be acceptable for distribution affected the country even after his death. Even though the transition to democracy permitted free speech by the late 1970s, the Spanish punk movement struggled to define itself as politically brash and gain an organic voice. As will be seen later in this chapter, the country's leftist movement during the transition period utilized the punk aesthetic for political purposes. Using artistic talent as propaganda was a calculated move that mimicked what Franco's dictatorship had been doing to court Hollywood and international investment during the 1950s and 1960s. While politicization by established institutions may be considered inauthentic punk, the Movida[5] and its subsequent impact for Spanish rock on the Iberian Peninsula cannot be understated. Within a brief period of time, Spain created its own punk narrative that shared many similar traits to other countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Mexico.

For nearly forty years, Spain's cultural expression was limited by Franco's regime and its strict obedience to conservativism. Control over freedom of expression was not simply the result of Francisco Franco's stringent right-wing moral ethic. Rather, the limits on expression came as an amalgamated initiative of various ruling groups steeped in Spanish conservative tradition.

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[5] The Movida Madrileña was the artistic and social movement that initially defined punk in Spain during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Chief among these players was the Roman Catholic church, which during Franco's dictatorship had commended the Nationalist government for bringing Spain back from the verge of total political chaos in the Spanish Civil War. As historians Jean Grugel and Tim Rees explain,

> The personnel of the church had been active in the war effort: every unit in the army had its priest, military and political banners were usually blessed, and the church's charitable and medical institutions were put into service. In return, the hierarchy, led by the primate Cardinal Isidro Gomá and the Vatican, looked to the new regime to defend religious rights and to restore the privileges of the church after the secular reforms which had been carried out during the republic. (Grugel and Rees 36)

But the Falangist regime did not bring conventional peace to the peninsula. Instead of extending a fair truce between the communist, socialist, and anarchist parties that fought against the conservatives, the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War led to the wholesale imprisonment and execution of many dissidents on the losing sides (24). Pope Pius XII's support of Franco's government was a calculated political move, not a commendation of their practices.

The papal commendation and close relationship between Rome and Madrid were due in part to Franco's commitment to reestablish religious orthodoxy within the state. The country grappled with a restructuring of their government and society after the war, but the ties between the government and the church were strong. The Francoist government had both a political and ideological need to instill Catholic values within a society that had felt betrayed by the democratic principles of the Second Republic. Politically, Catholicism gave the Falange a strong ally in controlling the peninsula. Ideologically, the Church could galvanize a stronger national identity through religion. As Grugel and Rees explain, "Not surprisingly, the desire to return to a supposedly better past infused church views on the war. In many ways this was not a

straightforward reaction, but a utopian vision that used nostalgia as a means to propound an image of society as it should be" (129). Because of this desire to re-indoctrinate Spanish society into conservative, Catholic ideologies from centuries past, the road to a countercultural Spain would take much longer than in other parts of the world.

Because Francoist rule mixed patriotism with religiosity, the general public avoided anything that could be construed as evil or morally bankrupt. The general tendency among the middle and upper class was to eschew hedonistic or deviant lifestyles depicted by foreign media. External factors like the government's mandate of curfews throughout the 1940s and 1950s and the church's close control of schools throughout the country indicated a strong program of social conditioning to erase any political or social dissidence. As historian Víctor Alba explained, "Religious censorship was absolute; books such as *Luther* by Funck Brenato and the *History of Philosophy* by Van Aster were suppressed. The budget for public instruction was diminished, while the publication of books, which soon became luxury items, declined. Film censorship filled the screen with 'friends' rather than lovers and 'illnesses' instead of suicides" (Alba 177). It was this political and ideological repression that demonstrated the Falange's wish to control the collective mind of the country. Censorship and re-education were the tools that helped achieve that effect.

However, displays of temperance in dress, diet, and consumption of media were not solely a compulsive act foisted upon the general populace by external institutions. Spain had long been a predominantly conservative country, and the Franco government simply bolstered those tendencies through careful propagandization, the expulsion of dissidents, and the establishment of a narrative that denounced the chaos and democratization of the Second Republic. Many parts of the country, while varying in their allegiance to the Franco dictatorship,

felt that the discord and contention that led to the Civil War was due to a cacophony of leftist ideologies that grinded against more conservative sentiments. Even though Franco's dictatorship was largely resented, many Spaniards felt that a stable government of any sort was a better option than the alternative.

The effects of the war still informed the way many people lived. Spaniards did not forget the trauma of war and famine, and their consumption habits reflected that trauma. People's diets were modest or frugal; clothes were functional and not flashy; parties and social events were simple occasions. Most of the people who lived this way did so because of survival habits learned during leaner times. Their level of austerity did not pass down to their children who did not remember that challenging era. By the end of the 1950s, a new generation that had not known the chaos and trauma of the Civil War were coming into adolescence. As a result, these youth wanted to indulge more. This phenomenon was not unique to Spain, as many postwar countries in the mid-twentieth century saw an increasingly globalized youth culture.

The concept of a youth culture apart from the dominant culture of a nation was a relatively new concept. Up until the early 1900s, child labor was a common attribute amongst most nations' agricultural and industrial development; therefore, working class youth spent more time laboring than pursuing personal tastes in music, art, and diversion. It was not until the introduction of laws such as the Factories Act of 1937 in England and the First Labor Standards Act of 1938 in the United States that child labor started to ebb in the developed world (Wiener 16). Alongside these acts were compulsory education requirements that helped increase the vocational possibilities and economic growth of the working and middle class in the first part of the 20th century. With compulsory education and the abolition of onerous labor on adolescents,

these same countries began to see the workings of a generation that started to determine their own lifestyle choices.

Spain saw the necessity of mandatory education during the Second Republic and in the Franco regime. In the early 1920s, the ministry of public education implemented compulsory education with the help of philanthropist and physician Gregorio Marañon (Rioth 104). Nationwide adherence to compulsory education occurred by 1940s, around the same time the Franco regime was at its most potent in political affairs. Although the educational system was heavily controlled by the Spanish Catholic Diocese, the result of compulsory education was a much more educated youth population with leisure time after school. Just like their American and British postwar counterparts, 1950s youth were able to obtain after-school jobs as a way to buy various paraphernalia such as fashionable clothing and records of what was then termed "música moderna": rock and roll.

This phenomenon of adolescent youth determining their own preferences made a generation gap. Styles in dress, music, and social behavior started to differ significantly from the preferences of the previous generation. This is due in large part to changes in the habitus of each generation. Habitus, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction*, comprises the conditioning agents by which people and classes learn social behaviors (101-2). Agents of social conditioning include institutions like the church or the state; other agents that influence the behaviors and trends of socialized groups include geographical space, income, education, race, and gender. From a sociological standpoint, these external factors are what form the bulwark of generational habitus, which are the practices of consumption demarcated by age and localization within a larger history. As Randolph Pope and Christine Henseler in explain in their introduction to *Generation X Rocks*, the generational gap between the two became especially pronounced in the

1960s, when the modernizing effects of international tourism and film distribution started to open up the country to a world that had significantly changed since the Spanish Civil War (xii).

The generational gap in Spain presented a conflict of political interests. Conservatives saw youth culture as juvenile delinquency, in large part because of sensationalized news from the foreign press. However, Franco realized that, in order for Spain to become a fully developed European state, the country had to embrace certain elements of youth culture. Other nations like Germany, France, England, and the United States created national economies out of youth preferences for film, music, and dress. The entertainment industry had the soft power[6] and political influence that Franco wanted so as to stay in high favor with the international community (Rosendorf 3-6). It was in this vein that the Francoist government recognized the need for a counterculture, but one that could be kept on a tight leash.

Throughout the 1950s, the term "juvenile delinquency" was a catch-all phrase that referred to behaviors in youth that contrasted the behaviors exhibited by previous generations. Delinquency, therefore, applied to all sorts of things that ranged in the spectrum from relatively innocuous to full-blown criminal activities. Spaniards constantly read headlines regarding acts of juvenile delinquency in other countries, thereby extolling the virtues of the state-controlled media and how wise it was to not let such racket disturb the peace of the nation. As former Spanish musician Aquilino Gómez explains, "Todos habíamos escuchado que los *teddy boys* [English term referring to juvenile delinquents] habían quemado cines en Londres cuando llegó el sonido de Bill Haley & his Comets a Inglaterra" (Alay 102). What was telling of news stories

[6] Political scientist Joseph Nye defined the term "soft power" as the tools and cooptation necessary to persuade or coerce other political subjects to do what is wanted. As Nye explains, "Soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want" (111) (From *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus/Public Affairs, 2004.)

like the one Gómez relates was how quickly hairstyles and leather jackets were grouped in the same category as arson, robbery, or assault.

It needs to be noted that Gómez references Bill Haley's hit "Rock Around the Clock," which became the calling card of the juvenile delinquency scare, thanks in part to the film *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). The upbeat tune plays during the opening title sequence while dancers do swing and twist moves in the background. After the tile sequence, the film depicts scenes of violence and degeneracy that, at the time, were almost censored by the Production Code Administration. This film created heated controversy not just through the United States and the United Kingdom, but also through Mexico, South America, and Spain when it was later introduced to those markets (Shary 13). Juvenile delinquency films became a major staple of MGM studios, which later released the seminal film *Rebel Without a Cause* that same year. Films like *Blackboard jungle* contributed to hasty generalizations throughout Spain about what youth culture could do to the moral fiber of the country.

And yet, while simultaneously propagating the notion of juvenile delinquency in Spain, the Ministry of Information and Tourism (MIT) initiated a large-scale attempt at bringing Hollywood to Spain. During the late 1940s, Franco reached out to the United States in order to quell any notion of lingering allegiances to his brief flirtation with Nazism. Franco saw the United States not only as a powerful ally, but a model by which Spain could learn to become a modern state. After signing an official alliance commonly known as the Madrid Pact with the United States, the MIT, under the direction of Manuel Fraga Iribarne, developed a tourism and international investment program that would run for the remainder of the Franco regime, enticing multinational tourism corporations such as American Express, Hilton Hotels, and TWA (Rosendorf 4-6, 13). The project designed press releases tailored to film production studios about

the advantages of filming in Spain as opposed to prohibitively expensive locales in Southern California. Spanish government representatives actively solicited studio executives from United Artists, Universal, and MGM to pitch Spain as the prime place to film. The tradeoff boosted international recognition through the media and boosted the economy and tourism.

Many conservative groups in Spain saw this encroachment of American culture as a threat to the purifying aspects of Francoism. The Falangista movement wanted a purged and purified Spain, one that looked and functioned similar to the Spain of Charles I. Such a Spain would never exist if US popular culture were to have a strong foothold in the country's collective conscience. Franco hesitated often about the prospect of films made in Spain that did not promote conservative values. However, as Neal Rosendorf explains, "The inescapable reality was that the US dominated the international film market, and the Franco regime felt compelled to come to terms with this supremacy and seek an accommodation" (52). Films from the United States, though often censored, fared better at the box office than regional, state-sponsored offerings around the country. Franco saw not only the economic benefits of adopting the system that Hollywood produced, but also the soft power influence it brought to the country. Containing the subversive gestures of Hollywood was a principal affair of the MIT for the next 15 years until 1965 when Luis Carrero Blanco, a staunch conservative, put a halt on most foreign film production and distribution until the death of Franco in 1975 (Rosendorf 192-3). While this dampened the rate at which youth watched then-popular teen films such as *Beach Party* (1963) or *Last Summer* (1969), the inertia of tourism and international investment continued to sustain trends.

There are several striking similarities between Franco's approach to dealing with the film industry and his treatment of the music industry. Most record production and distribution in

Spain was limited to traditional folkloric music and high art music. “Modern music” was just as problematic to the MIT as Hollywood films, and far more difficult to censor. After the Madrid Pact of 1953, the United States armed forces were allowed to establish military bases to help defend against the threat of communism (Alba 204). With these bases that were principally stationed in Cádiz and Torrejón came base station radio. These pseudo-border blaster radio stations (akin to their Mexican-American counterparts) pumped radio transmissions with all the popular music from back home (Peinazo 64). Because of this, anyone in Spain with a decent radio could listen to groups such as the Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, and a litany of others without having to resort to smuggling. The MIT was aware of this, but little could be done, since military bases had US sovereignty to back them in their decisions regarding radio transmissions. Rock groups now had an audience in Spain, and that would raise problems for a government that regularly cracked down on subversion.

Modern music’s gesture had to be contained in a way that would not harm the national narrative of moral purity, nor introduce politically subversive material. Several attempts were made during the 1960s to have groups such as Elvis Presley, The Beach Boys, and the Rolling Stones come to Spain. On most occasions, there was nothing officially wrong or illegal about planning tour dates in Spain for such groups. However, due to subtle political influences, many of these bands abandoned plans altogether, realizing how difficult it was to deal with Spanish bureaucracy and meddling. In July of 1965, under guidance from Parlophone records’ Madrid office, the Beatles played two concerts in Spain: one in the Plaza de Toros de las Ventas in Madrid and the other in La Monumental in Barcelona. The reception of the British invaders from state media was cold. Newsreel clips show a near-empty stadium for the Beatles concert in

Madrid, as the footage was taken hours before the concert[7]. While the concert was sold out in reality, the newsreel demonstrates the strenuous relationship between Spanish society and the rising counterculture.

As the 1960s became more politicized throughout the entertainment industry, Franco recognized the need to contain the rock gesture before it could corrupt the youth of the nation. Because of this, the MIT introduced groups that fit within the national discourse. Groups such as Dúo Dinámico recorded translated versions of popular songs into Spanish, with the caveat that they mull over any questionable lyrics, and that they choose tunes that were lyrically clean such as "Bye Bye Love" (1957) by the Everly Brothers (Alay 50). But perhaps the most recognized experiment with home-grown rock both in Spain and outside of it was Los Bravos.

As a rock group, Los Bravos had all the trappings of late British Invasion: modern-style clothing, semi-long messenger boy haircuts, and thin builds. Los Bravos stuck out as the first international offering of Spanish rock with their hit "Black is Black" which reached No. 2 on the United Kingdom Billboard in July of 1966. Accompanied by a Motown-inspired horn section and a riff reminiscent of The Doors, the song reflects the musical styles popular for that time period with near-perfect precision. This one track helped the band go on to sell more than 1 million records over time, becoming the first Spanish rock group to gain international attention in the music industry. Like their British and American contemporaries, Los Bravos would gain notoriety not only as a musical outfit but also as an on-screen presence. Their first filmic outing was *Los chicos con las chicas* in 1967, a comedic romp with the band going to a parochial school for girls in pursuit of their girlfriends. The film is as chaste as rock films can come, with nothing

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[7] See Youtube: "1965 The Beatles in Spain (Madrid) - Los Beatles en España, nota riéndose de su supuesto poco éxito" https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=172&v=yPnRKfpRWW0

in the way of sexual deviancy or rupture with Catholic church doctrines (the film does take place in a Catholic run school). While rigid authority figures like the mother superior and the parents of the girls do depict an unflattering stereotype, by the end of the film everyone comes to the conclusion that the kids are not doing anything devious or bad and thereby embrace the raucous music and dance of Los Bravos.

This film demonstrates Spain's critical juncture during Franco's decline: while the MIT had successfully contained counterculture through the 1960s and most of the 1970s, modern trends in music, clothing, and lifestyle got a warmer reception from the general populace. *Los chicos con las chicas* is hardly a subversive movie. If anything, it was a clunky attempt to cash in on the success of other rock films coming out around the same time such as *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Don't Knock the Twist* (1962). The film does highlight the change in attitude towards rock music and youth culture. Spanish critics had a harder time making the case against rock music and its corroding moral effects if films like *Los chicos con las chicas* portrayed the music as harmless fun for the whole family. Because of this, people's previously negative or reticent views about youth culture evolved towards favorable opinions.

Moreover, class-conscious citizens saw the political power that music wielded. While the US military radio stations blasted songs like Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son" (1969) that protested the Vietnam War, Spanish artists learned the musical vocabulary of protest. In 1975, the band Jarcha (a group from Andalucía that modeled their style after the New Christy Minstrels), recorded the song "Libertad sin ira". The catchy chorus rung well with a nation that was feeling the momentum building for democracy: "¡Libertad! ¡Libertad!/Sin ira, libertad/Gúardate tu miedo y tu ira/¡Porque hay libertad!/Sin ira, libertad/Y si no la hay, sin duda la habrá." The song became a major campaign slogan for the Partido Socialista Obrero Español

(PSOE) during the post-Franco constitutional conventions. Other artists picked up on these more politically-charged songs throughout the transition period. Writer and musician José Antonio Labordeta composed "Canto a la libertad" right after the death of Franco in 1975 to act as a unifying hymn that pointed towards the same hope sung about in "Libertad sin ira". María Ostiz released "Un pueblo es" in 1977 as a chastisement of political doublespeak. These musicians figured prominently in cultural discussions, as these songs often were sung en masse during demonstrations about the need for a constitution and more democracy.

¡Adiós Franco! ¡Hola Almodóvar!

On October 31st, 1978, the constitution of Spain was successfully ratified, which moved the country towards democratic processes and relaxed censorship laws. The return of the Bourbons to Spain was under the conditions of constitutional law rather than supreme monarchical rule. Organizations like the MIT either dissolved or were repurposed according to the needs of a parliament that now represented the people. These milestones indicated the casting off of the dictatorship's propaganda and censorship. In this new era of Spanish politics, individual citizens had a voice that could not be easily silenced by institution. Free speech had come to stay in what many political scientists consider to be the most successful transition to democracy in the 20th century.

It was at this point that the Movida madrileña started to galvanize the Spanish punk gesture. The Movida was a movement of artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers who were invested in exploring what it meant to live in post-Franco Spain. Instead of a repressed and docile city that lingered during the dictatorship, Madrid exploded with visual and performing art that was at once risqué and dazzlingly open in comparison to the past. Pedro Almodóvar filmed stories about sexually liberated women such as *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón*

(1980). Graffiti Artist Muelle tagged half of Madrid within about 4 years with his trademark signature. Visual artist "El Hortelano" displayed some of his earliest work that would later make their way into modern museums such as the Reina Sofia. While there is some debate as to the initial beginnings and final curtain of this time period, the Movida madrileña occurred roughly between 1978 and 1983 when the concept of constitutional freedom of expression became commonplace among Spanish citizens.

The Movida gained its traction when Enrique Tierno Galván became the mayor of Madrid in 1979. Galván's played a significant role in generating a more cosmopolitan, progressive city. This was not just because he was in the right place at the right time. Having spent his life as an influential professor of literature and sociology both in Salamanca and Princeton, Galván was well aware of the power entertainment had on political alignments. While he was incredibly effective at improving the infrastructure of Madrid through barrio-wide renovations including the demolition of chabolas (shanty towns) and the updating of public works, Galván was equally effective at developing his own brand of socialism for the masses. Decades before his mayorship, he helped create the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) that would later evolve into the PSOE. His close work with opposition parties like these meant he was well-aware of the power music, art, and cinema had in influencing voters and public policy.

César Alonzo de los Ríos, in his biography on Galván, claims that the Movida was an act of tangential coincidence, that artists such as Kaka de Luxe or Pedro Almodóvar, "Fueron el producto de una misma eclosión social" (257). Despite rejecting the notion of Galván's influence on the artistic movement in his own city, Ríos explains that the city experienced an opening up of sorts to the carnavalesque. While Galván may not have been directly bankrolling groups or artists such as Kaka de Luxe, the shortsightedness of Ríos' refusal of the Movida's influence in political

discourse is present. It did not matter whether everything on Kaka de Luxe's first album was in line with PSOE doctrine. It did not matter whether Almodóvar was making cinema that awakened people to social consciousness or not. Galván was interested in bringing back an integral part of Spanish life by allowing the carnivalesque to exist again, regardless of its message. This permission of fringe artistry and expression was a strong signifier that Spain was moving forward to the future, a future that even Franco was obsessed with during his modernizing projects of the 1950s and 1960s when at the zenith of his power. As historian Víctor Alba explained near the end of his history of the transitional period: "For centuries, the Spaniards lived without a present, escaping into a utopia; at times, running back to the past, and at others, living in the future, always waiting for something, always trying–often with violence–to find a place in the present" (298). This yearning for a present that felt modern, that felt comfortable to Spain, was a strong underlying force for allowing the fringe to reappear in the form of punk.

Even if the connection between Galván and the Movida is only slight, part of the reason some such as Jules Stewart in his book *Madrid: The History* point at Galván for causing the Movida is the need to explain the Movida's popularity. The professor-turned-mayor became iconic as a result of his legacy, and the same thing occurred for artists involved in the Movida. Indeed, the Movida is now seen in Spanish cultural history as a watermark moment. The Movida was a mainstream phenomenon. Almodóvar became the darling of international cinema in the United States with *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988), Radio Futura sold millions of records, Alaska and her various musical endeavors put her at the top of the Spanish pop charts on many occasions during the 1980s. Even more pedestrian listeners of Spanish-speaking music can recognize the bands in this chapter. The popularity of someone as revered as Tierno Galván easily fits with the superstars of the Movida.

But part of the problem with this paradigm is that while the Movida centered on the punk aesthetic, it ran the risk of being perceived as inauthentic from the get-go by being accepted as mainstream. Sociologist Erik Hannerz explains that punk views the mainstream as something that, "can never be subcultural because they are too controlled and passive to break away from everyone else" (57). Such a breaking away from the predominant society of the time most certainly occurred with the Movida, but over time it became an accepted era seen as some sort of liberating and expressive fever dream. This view obscures what that time period accomplished in the punk world, containing the punk gesture that came from it.

The sentiment of several Spanish punk writers is that punk in Spain was not really authentic from the get-go. Rather than being an organic movement based in frustrations about the socioeconomic disadvantages that were surrounding the youth of the country, some argue that punk was more of an aesthetic choice to drive home a frivolous message without much content. Paul Begin argues this extensively in his essay on the punk narrative in Spain:

> While punk was a strategy for protesting social conditions and mainstream values in Britain during the seventies, it actually helped the movida to move in the opposite direction during the eighties. The movida version of punk is not disquieting, but kitschified and fun. By 1984, the movida and its punk stylings were fully integrated into the mainstream, to the extent that the popular children's television program, "La bola de Cristal," featured Alaska as a sort of postmodern witch ("El librovisor") along with a group of puppets (akin to Jim Henson's Muppets) called the "Electroduendes," whose linguistic tics and ironic commentary more than hinted at their hedonistic excesses. (17)

Begin follows this example with the argument that, "Punk, as a commercial commodity, is stripped of its political potency and neutralized. It is decontextualized from its so-called

working-class opposition. It is used only as an aesthetic device; it is trouble as fun." (17) The argument that Begin offers highlights the stress between commercialization and the need to maintain the communal boundaries of punk by simultaneously conserving the political gesture. It is true that punk was an invention of primarily British youth that soon was exported abroad after the success of groups such as the Sex Pistols. But even rock outfits like The Clash and John Lydon's Public Image Ltd. became mainstream after a few years, garnering attention in the music industry as post-punk bands started to rebrand themselves into new wave bands like The Police or Depeche Mode.

This split between different types of punk started almost as immediately as punk itself was born. The same can be said to have happened in Spain. As author Marc Gras points out on his survey of the genre on the Iberian Peninsula:

> Básicamente, el punk en España podría separarse en dos grandes grupos: el político y el no político, o el 'punk patatero'–según Evaristo, de La Polla [Records]–y el 'punk pijo'; algo que en cierta manera también puede aplicarse al punk inglés (con los Damned o los Clash) respecto al punk americano (los Ramones, Television, etc.); y aunque esto de agrupar tendencias no sea del todo justo, lo que sí está más claro son los grandes focos punkies (que no los únicos) que se dieron en España: Euskadi, Barcelona, Madrid y Zaragoza. (Gras 76)

Granted, Radio Futura, Alaska y los Pegamoides, and La Mode–all of which derived from Kaka de Luxe–went on to achieve commercial success far beyond the fringe communities of Madrid's barrios, and in so doing dispensed with some of the punk gesture in favor of more radio-friendly fare. Yet there are plenty of examples of bands that continued in punk far beyond the 1980s and well into the 1990s: Parálisis Permanente, La Polla Records, Siniestro Total, and Eskorbuto to

name a few. But most of these bands continue to remain in the peripheries of the Spanish soundscape while their less-political brethren have gone on to massive success.

At this point, it is necessary to talk about the two most influential bands of the late 1970s punk scene in Spain. The first one, Kaka de Luxe, might possibly be the closest thing to a Spanish version of the Sex Pistols. Their musical influence not only spread to other musicians vis-a-vis their only record released in 1978, but most of the band members went on to other projects that would be infinitely more successful in commercialization. The second band, Radio Futura, is a direct result of the prior band's influence on the Spanish musical scene. Unlike Kaka de Luxe, however, Radio Futura would ditch most of the trappings of their punk aesthetic in exchange for a pop/new wave sound that somewhat betrayed their own initial strengths as a band.

El paraíso y Kaka de Luxe

In the fall of 1977, Olvido Gara (aka Alaska) and Nacho Canut began throwing around the idea of forming a rock band with fellow members Manolo Campoamor, Carlos Berlanga, Enrique Sierra, and Fernando Márquez (aka "El Zurdo"). The concept was a bit of a pipe dream initially, since none of the original band members had much musical background to warrant creating a rock band. Kaka de Luxe was originally a fanzine operation, as Márquez and Campoamor were cartoonists and the rest of the group were fans of music overseas. Most of them came from middle class or upper-class backgrounds where their focus of study in school was writing, journalism, or visual art. Berlanga, for instance, was the son of acclaimed film director Luis García Berlanga, who made the award-winning film *Esa pareja feliz* (1951) and the Franco doctrine-infused comedy *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall* (1953). Forming the band was not initially meant to be a serious endeavor. But within a few months of consistent practice, the band

started to take form as a real musical outfit. By the time the band members learned the basics of their respective instruments, Kaka de Luxe was born.

The band started recording their only album in 1977. The sessions were constantly stopped and slowed down by issues with tuning, technical problems, and the band's need to rehearse. The opening track on *Kaka de Luxe* titled "La tentación" perfectly captures some of these issues. Within the first ten seconds of the song, chord after chord is played on out-of-tune guitars that struggle to keep an even tempo. At moments, the band sounds almost as if they are about to go out of sync with each other and lose the groove completely. Campoamor's voice sounds strained and unflattering, as if he is barely able to handle the task of singing. The recording muddles the sound of the guitars with the bass guitar, and the drum track sounds muted in the background. Most casual listeners might find this song, and several other songs on the album, rather difficult to enjoy.

To make it further discomforting for a casual listener of the time, "La Tentación" recounts a homosexual encounter at a nightclub. The couple dances while the narrator struggles with the temptation set before him, "Y mi castigo en el infierno tendré". Later after dancing, the other partner asks the narrator to come to his place to make love. While they are getting ready, the narrator realizes that his current predicament is very different than what he had originally expected. He sees his partner dressed in leather and realizes that he is about to have an experience in BDSM:

> Todo en cuero negro un látigo sacó
>
> Entonces me dijo que me iba a dar mi merecido
>
> ¡Que todo esto me pasaba por ser una puta guarra!

Rather than being a song about how to resist temptation or even a song about heteronormative sex, “La tentación” immediately delves into fringe territory. Homosexuality during Francoist Spain was taboo enough, and BDSM was almost from another planet. To have the opening track of an album focus on such themes was an indicator of how much things in Spain had changed from the time of Los Bravos to the early 1980s.

This was also a sign of a significant break with the popular musical constructs of the time, as most music in Spain up to that time period avoided controversy because of censorship and fear of bad press. A fundamental principle of popular music is to appeal to the largest audience possible. While controversy today may help boost sales of popular recording artists such as Katy Perry or Kanye West, crossing the line on social and political mores can land (and have landed) artists in serious commercial trouble[8]. The idea of recording a song with such obscene lyrics is a rejection of the mainstream. Throughout almost any genre of music, some musicians have had little vested interest in whether or not their music was deemed appropriate by the masses. The punk gesture certainly fits such a description of rejection. It is no surprise, then, that a band like Kaka de Luxe made a name for themselves by being the center of controversy, not concerning themselves with whether they were a commercially viable brand in the Spanish market.

The second song on the album “Rosario/Toca el pito” is a two-part drama about young people who kill their parents in an attempt to save themselves from the strictures of a society that

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[8] A perfect example of this would be the Beatles: In March of 1966, before beginning their second and final tour of the United States, The Beatles faced serious criticism after John Lennon had been quoted by the *Evening Standard*: “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I'm right and I'll be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first – rock 'n' roll or Christianity.” The backlash to this statement led to a severe reduction in album sales, and several concert date cancellations. The band experienced lackluster ticket sales in which several venues were only half full. After the incident, the band never went on tour again and focused solely on studio albums after the fact.

does not understand them. The first section is a twelve bar blues sped up to sound more punk, while the second section returns to the doo wop progression with slight variations. The final chorus of the first section advises those who are in a similar situation to kill someone and get out of the house: "Pa' qué estás esperando/para irte de tu casa?/Puedes matar a alguien con una lanza/Puedes matar a alguien con una lanza" Such an invocation to the audience is provocative to say the least. Because most of Kaka de Luxe's album is thick with sarcasm and satire, the song does not seem to advocate for wholesale patricide. Rather, it highlights the ever-present anxieties that clash between the older generation of Spaniards and the rising generation.

The second section of the song is an overt sexual appellation, once again directed to the listener. "Si te encuentras sola/silba y acudiré", the line starts out innocently enough. In the next verse, however, the singer says that if the receiver of the message uses a vibrator at night that they should "toca el pito", which could either mean "blow the whistle" or to "blow the penis" (oral sex). The double entendre here makes it clear that there is more than the message of being taken care of by someone who will come to one's rescue at the sounding of a whistle. The not-so-subtle wordplay in this section offers the whole meaning of the song altogether: sexual liberation. The killing of parental figures in the first part is not literal in this interpretation, as the parent is a symbol of institutionalized sexual repression. Once freed from the confines of the familial house or institution, the ability to explore sexuality becomes almost as easy as blowing a whistle.

Before moving on, I wish to comment on Kaka de Luxe's use (or overuse) of song structures and chord progressions. The album's constant repetitive chord progressions indicate, once again, the novice level of proficiency most of the band has. Songs like "Pero me aburro," "Pero qué público más tonto tengo," and "Viva el metro" all sound relatively similar. This is in

part because they all are played in the same key, and in part because they all borrow the same chord progression. Slight differences between the songs highlight the anxiety the band has in trying to sound like they are not playing the same song over and over. Kaka de Luxe is never quite able to progress from their simplistic roots of imitation towards experimentation. Their strength was never in their sound quality, but in their lyrical writing. In a way, the album could be seen as sung poetry with a backdrop of novice musicians.

But it is this level of novice-ness that distinguishes the band as a punk outfit. In punk, musical virtuosity is not seen as a sign of authenticity–in some cases, it is seen as the complete opposite. Virtuosity is a sign of careful upbringing, of institutions that have placed careful control on the aesthetic quality of a musician's body of work. As Simon Frith argues in *Performing Rites*, virtuosity tends to lend itself to the high art world, a place of distinction by socioeconomic barriers and social conditioning (31-35). Furthermore, sociologist Stacy Thompson points out that there is a meaning behind poorly-crafted songs while talking about the English band Crass: "The band members play their instruments quickly, which adds to the sense that they have much to communicate but cannot possibly transmit it all within the limits of a song or album." (84) Virtuosity, therefore, might be viewed as a sign of inauthenticity within the punk aesthetic, as punk derives its social habitus from a DIY, organic attitude towards music. This means that, at least in its early years, punk was never so much concerned about the quality of the musicianship or the technical strengths of a recording. Rather, punks wanted their music to be expressive of their frustrations; they wanted the freedom to write the script of their experience however they pleased.

For Kaka de Luxe, music was a means to an end: namely, to reinscribe themselves as subjects beyond the scope of conservative, normative Spain. The repressive nature of Franco's

Spain had elevated the Spanish search for identity to the level of trauma. The punk gesture served as a tool to re-examine elements of that identity that had been so long ingrained into Iberian society. Some of the band members continued on in the music industry, as will be seen later. But Kaka de Luxe was about that necessity to pick up an instrument and write something that didn't necessarily fit within the national narrative on purpose. Now that censorship was not nearly as stringent as it had been ten or twenty years prior, the voice of Spain that had been silenced during Francoism was able to reemerge through spaces and times like *La Movida Madrileña*.

By 1978, Kaka de Luxe disbanded. Several of the male band members had to perform mandatory military service the following year. That means it was less than a two-year period for the band to not only record an album, but to perform sufficiently enough at local bars and nightclubs to gain notoriety. In 1983, on the television special *Siglo de oro*, Kaka de Luxe performed for one last time in front of a live studio audience. Lead singer Manolo Campoamor and guitarist Enrique Sierra both stated in the pre-show band interview that there would be no more Kaka de Luxe after that. The band's musical direction could no longer go on in one straight line: Carlos Berlanga and Alaska had gone on to start various pop groups such as Los Pegamoides (with Alaska as the Madonna-like star), Enrique Sierra went on to become lead guitarist of Radio Futura, Fernando Márquez formed synthpop group La Mode, Nacho Canut continued in Parálasis Permanente until he joined Alaska in future projects, and Manolo Campoamor left the music business to pursue his passion for cartooning.

The impact of Kaka de Luxe has been gushed about for decades now. Most of the band members consistently referred back to their beginnings in Kaka de Luxe throughout their career. Alaska y Dinarama recorded a song in 1985 titled "Un huracán mexicano," in which she name

drops her beginnings as a guitarist for the band: "El primer combo en que debuté/allá por el setenta y siete,/dímelo tú, (Kaka de Luxe)." Other members like Nacho Canut and Enrique Sierra, who carried a more subdued presence in their subsequent projects, did not have to readily claim the roots of their musical authority back to Kaka de Luxe, in large part because they were in other, more commercially successful endeavors. But the fact remains that a shadow was cast across the Spanish punk movement because of the band's patrimony and progeny. In the same way that John Lydon of the Sex Pistols capitalized on his former band's success by creating his own hit-machine Public Image Ltd., Kaka de Luxe was an originating point of artistic panache for its alumni.

While this is probably the most applicable to Alaska and her various projects over the decades, her musical trajectory pointed towards solo female pop more than punk or rock. That is why I chose Radio Futura rather than Alaska to examine the evolution of punk in Spain. While Radio Futura did go on to devlop a more commercial pop sound, their genre remained within the confines of a rock context. Furthermore, the band's essential core remained together throughout the 1980s, unlike Alaska who changed her musical branding more than three times in the same period.

La Música moderna de Radio Futura

In 1979, Herminio Molero (Synth), Brothers Santiago (Vocals and guitar) and Luís Auserón (Bass), Enrique Sierra (Guitar), and Javier Pérez Grueso (Drums) came together to form Radio Futura and started working on their first EP titled *Música moderna* (1980) under the Parlophone Spain record label. At the time, the record was one of the first post-Kaka de Luxe works to debut after Alaska y Los Pegamoides' single, "Horror en el hipermercado" (1980). As a new band, they were rather unremarkable in comparison to the proliferation of other bands that

were recording and gigging around the same time. Leño, Barrón Rojo, and Triana all were playing at the same time as Radio Futura, and there were plenty of foreign acts that were touring through Spain as well. What made Radio Futura stick out against a much larger market was their post punk sensibility. Their songwriting was not like that of Triana, which was a prog rock band, nor were they like Leño with their Led Zeppelin-esque sound. Radio Futura was definitely from a punk background, and that would automatically put them in higher esteem with the growing Spanish punk community.

The opening track "Enamorado de la moda juvenil" begins with a hand clap sound followed by a wall of fuzzy guitars–all in tune with each other this time. The song is a lighthearted romp about young kids who go down to the Puerta del Sol in Madrid and are enraptured by the fashions and products they encounter there. The title for this thesis is actually derived from this song, as the singers croon about how in a moment they understood, after looking at all the products readily available for consumption, that "el futuro ya está aquí." The song is not rhythmically complex, neither is its structure very progressive. The singers both have flat, unadorned vocals that conjure up the images of brash youth, thereby lending the album to its punk influences. The song sounds like a slightly sweeter version of a Ramones song, as the guitars play a machine gun-like riff through the entirety of the song. These elements lend themselves to the Kaka de Luxe past of Spanish punk, in that their authenticity is derived from the full-frontal, edgy sound of the cut. The whole album, in fact, plays with this wall of sound[9]

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[9] The concept of "Wall of Sound" was originally invented by recording engineer Phil Spector at Gold Star Studios in the 1960s as a way of making the overall mix of a song more appealing to listen to on the radio. In essence, the frequency of the sound is compressed to make sure that the loud parts are not too loud and the quiet parts are not too quiet. Spector used this particular method of equalization to improve the tracks for The Beatles' album *Let it Be* (1970), for which he won a Grammy award (Ribowsky 3-6). In the case of Radio Futura, the tracking of the guitars and drums were evenly displaced while also adjusting the equalization to emphasize the higher and lower frequencies that would come across more easily on a radio. Kaka de Luxe's album has little to none of this level of engineering, since whole instrument tracks are lost in the background noise.

concept to emphasize the pleasant sound of the rough textures of the guitars, vocals and synthesizers.

But what separates Radio Futura's debut album from that of Kaka de Luxe is the shift in focus from political satire. *Música Moderna* is less interested in taking pot shots at Spanish society and the government and more focused on generating pop hits. In reality, the opening track is reflective of this sentiment, as it wilfully accepts consumerism and materialism as a good thing. Some might argue that it is a tongue-in-cheek jab at capitalist tendencies during the transición. While that may be a possibility, it is not out of line to see "Enamorado de la moda juvenil" as a reflection of the overwhelming economic optimism that the country had in that moment:

Yo vi a la gente joven andar
Corta el aire de seguridad
En un momento comprendí
Que el futuro ya está aquí.
Y yo caí enamorado de la moda juvenil
De los precios y rebajas que yo vi,
Enamorado de ti.

The song is emblematic of the fever-pitch economic growth that underpinned most of the 1980s. The excitement of going down to La Puerta del Sol in Madrid in order to buy things that could easily as well be bought at the local Corte Inglés further emphasizes that consumption is a very Spanish thing to do in the 1980s. Rather than look back at the scanty and famine-stricken years

of postwar Spain, the song looks to the future when food, products, and wealth abound at an exciting pace.

Furthermore, the lyrics of the album treat surreal subjects that have little resemblance to the concrete and clear hermeneutics of Kaka de Luxe. It seems as though the lyrics are more focused on the resonance of the words in conjunction with the melody than hermeneutics. "Ivonne" narrates a brief encounter with a drunk woman who responds to questions about herself in French. The song offers little else in the way of context. A listener can only assume that it is an encounter, possibly sexual in nature. Apart from that, the guitars play a catchy syncopated riff over a drum machine while Auserón improvises vocally. "Ivonne" fits as a contribution to the album, but with little hermeneutic content to contribute. Another song that obfuscates theme is "Cinco semanas en globo," a title that references Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Despite carrying the connotation of travel and adventure, the lyrics have little relevance to the late 19th century novel:

> Oigo voces invisibles que cantan
> mientras los ojos me cambian de color.
> La inteligencia no sirve de nada
> si la cabeza te cambia de color.
> Cinco semanas en globo
> y sin ganas de volver.

Because the lyrics are bereft of any political or social angst, it can be easily argued that the split from the punk gesture for Radio Futura started at its inception. While Enrique Sierra carried with him the Kaka de Luxe ethos, Radio Futura was less interested in forming political agenda and more interested in creating popular music. The very name of the album harkens back to the time

when rock was referred to as "modern music," a genre ready to be commercially exploited and sold. The lyrics of subsequent albums would be lacking in the punk gesture even more, as the provocative surrealism of this album is supplanted by more concrete lyrics about love, deception, and observations on life.

Another difference between Kaka de Luxe's only album and *Música Moderna* is the focus on musical experimentation. This is most likely because of Herminio Molero's extensive synth use throughout most of the songs. What the Auserón brothers and Enrique Sierra still lacked in their playing abilities, Molero made up with gorgeous sound effects that give the entirety of the album a level of depth that could not be found previously. Simultaneously, the band's rhythmic choices take a sharp turn after the first song, with the song "Ivonne" being a slightly more counterpoint-based beat. The band also experiments with reggae and Latin sounds in the song "Zombi," an experimentation that would later define the band's signature sound in their heyday. Molero's sometimes bizarre and futuristic sound effects ties together the tonal differences between songs. In "Zombi," synth sounds mimic the falling of bombs while in "Ivonne" and "Cinco semanas en globo" odd sound effects that are reminiscent of laser beams pan back and forth on the stereo. The slow pulse of the final song on the album, "La máquina," is driven almost completely by the synthesizer organs and Molero's strange sound effects. Large, cascading chords build one upon the other to create the tension of a song that has a very slow beat in comparison to most punk songs.

Radio Futura's first album is aesthetically more pleasing to listen to than Kaka de Luxe's, and that possibly makes it less of a punk album and more of a mainstream contribution. The sound production and quality of *Música moderna* stands head and shoulders over *Kaka de Luxe*, meaning a rejection of the punk gesture's gritty, unadorned ethos. However, experimentation is a

vital element of the DIY aesthetic in punk. Just because the sound quality and production values are higher does not mean that the album is a complete work of art. To the contrary, some of the songs are rather difficult to enjoy because of the wacky synths and the dragged-out experimentation in song structures. “La máquina” is a song that feels like it should have ended a few minutes earlier due to its repetitiveness and uninspiring composition. “Ivonne” plays as a filler song. “Cinco semanas en globo” contains a strange descending cadence in the chorus that can turn listeners off. Their experimentation (and failure because of it) counterbalances the increase in quality production that might preclude the album from being considered true punk.

In a way, the freedom to fail in musical experimentation is a hallmark of subcultural authenticity, and perhaps is the sole reason as to why this album can safely be considered a punk offering. This is because failure in music is different. Radio stations prefer to play music that sounds good, or that is executed well both in its composition and in its performance. This leads to a homogeneous production status quo that revolves around institutionalized notions of what can be allowed as quality music production and what is considered to be too fringe. In that liminal space where musical difference and failure reside is where true punk lives. As Erik Hannerz explains in his sociological study on perceived freedom in punk:

> When participants enacted a moral distinction against an external mainstream, they concieved of this as rejecting external restrictions so as to be able to freely express who they really were. Perceived attempts by the mainstream to keep them in line were, therefore, described as a threat not only to a stylistic difference but also to a moral freedom. (58)

The freedom for bands such as Radio Futura to experiment stands out as perhaps the single greatest reason that punk has thrived beyond its inception and forward into mainstream culture,

as there is a great emphasis on personal expression regardless of the aesthetic values an external institution may place upon said expression. However, as was seen by the second album by Radio Futura and in the following chapters, the conflict between artistic integrity and the need to sell product naturally imposes limits of expression on rock groups.

La ley del desierto/La ley del mar

The sophomore album of Radio Futura did not come out until 1984 under the self-distributing German record label Ariola. Conflict and mis-communication hampered the band's previous ventures with Parlophone and Hispavox, as record executives obligated them to fulfill their contract according to what they wanted. Financial troubles gripped Hispavox in the early 1980s, as CBS and WEA had terminated their contracts recently with them and EMI music group was about to buy their catalog (Callis 1). Hispavox put Radio Futura under strict obligations to complete several tours, as the company saw problems with their balance sheet that could be alleviated by using their higher-selling acts. Meanwhile, the band was trying to determine their musical direction. This made matters with Hispavox worse. As Santiago Auserón explained:

> Tuvimos que sentarnos los cinco y aclarar qué queríamos hacer: si Warhol u otro tipo de experimentación. Nosotros tres queríamos un cuarteto de rock con modelos como los Clash, que sabían integrar en el rock europeo cadencias del *reggae,* y Cure, que tenían un gran refinamiento en las melodías. Decidimos profesionalizarnos. Lo dejamos todo, a pesar de tener a la compañía [Hispavox] en contra porque no queríamos entrar por la vía *fans.* Tuvimos que cambiar el sentido del grupo, lo que costó varios años. (Iturriaga)

Hispavox saw the band's experimental sound as problematic. The trio that comprised the continuing core of Radio Futura (the Auserón brothers and Enrique Sierra) wanted to become like The Clash or The Cure, bands that for all intents and purposes were more pop than punk.

Molero was more of the Andy Warhol-esque avant garde type. The two artistic paths diverged widely because one focused on commercialization while the other focused on artistic exploration. As Auserón even said in the interview, the challenge was to change the sense of the group, something that took many years to do because of this conflict between musical directions.

After the departure of Herminio Molero and the replacement of drummer Javier Grueso by Carlos "Solrac" Velázquez, Radio Futura released *La ley del desierto / La ley del mar* in the summer of 1984 to critical and commercial acclaim[10]. The album boasted a significantly different sound from the first album, in large part because of the special focus on carefully crafted pop-rock songs. As will be seen in the following chapter with Ritmo Peligroso and in the final chapter with Rock en tu idioma, the shift in focus often occurs between community prominence and the possibility of success outside of the punk community. Radio Futura's closeness to the Movida community helped them gain their initial popularity, playing concerts on a regular basis with other bands. Their success with *Ley* became a clear indicator that there was a significant break with their local community. *Ley* would go on to become one of their most influential albums, specifically because of the multiple radio singles contained on the album.

The opening track "Tormenta de arena" denotes what the album's ambitions are: hard-hitting new wave music. The opening riff and drums are reminiscent of Duran Duran's opening riff from "Hungry Like the Wolf" (1982). New romantic groups like Duran Duran and Depeche Mode were extremely popular in Europe during this time, and it is no surprise that Radio Futura wanted to imitate other trending musicians. The chorus's barrage of feverishly-paced big chords on the guitar reinforce the similarity, with overdramatic chords that separate the verse sections.

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[10] In 2004, Spanish rock magazine *Rockdeluxe* listed *La ley del desierto* as number 13 on their list of the top 100 Spanish pop albums of all time. Similar lists from rock radio websites *Efe Eme* and *Al Borde* place the album in the top 50 albums.

Added to this is the laid-back groove of the second track on the album, "Hadaly," that showcases a highly present flanger effect on the guitar, giving the song a futuristic and fantastical quality on top of a raw rock beat. And without Molero's oddly-placed synthesizer effects and sounds, the album's overall texture feels more consistent with itself. It is clear within the first seven minutes of the album that *Ley* cannot pretend to be a punk album at all, and they clearly embrace that fact.

The third song, however, was probably the biggest hit out of the entire record. "Escuela de calor" combined all the elements that Radio Futura had put together since their inception: an irresistibly catchy pop song with musical virtuosity that was not afraid to be slightly more experimental. Its provocative and slightly sexual lyrics combined well with the steady groove of a song that to this day gets radio airplay. Decades later, the video game *Guitar Hero: World Tour* (2008) featured the song on their main list of international hits, reflecting the longevity of the single. The puckish riff at the beginning also demonstrates that the band had increased in technical ability significantly in comparison to their early days of rudimentary machine gun riffs. The groove feels natural and effortless, something that was significantly lacking even on *Música*, where at times the musicianship felt unsure and uncomfortable. By the time *Ley* came out all of the songs, including the instrumental version of "Escuela de calor" and the radio single, felt like they fit together correctly.

What was even more monumental with "Escuela" was the music video that accompanied the release of the album. In 1984, the concept of music videos was still in development. The Music Television (MTV) channel had only started in the United States three years earlier in 1981, and MTV Latin America would not exist for another decade. The purpose of a video jukebox channel was to develop interest for songs and artists in a way that had previously been

technologically limiting (Arnold 17-8). This innovation would, in turn, spur on record sales throughout the 1980s, as will be examined more carefully in the third chapter. Suffice it to say, the idea of having a Spanish-speaking music video for “Escuela de calor” was an experiment in the new medium.

The basic storyline is of two unsuspecting women who come to a nightclub where the band members are working. Their drinks are spiked and as a result the women are tied and gagged to be taken to a place that the audience can only assume is the escuela de calor. Aesthetically, the video gels with the sexual tension and lyrical darkness of the song: the sharply-dressed band members dance and perform throughout the video in costumes reminiscent of the droog gang in Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). The sleek surroundings of the nightclub accompany the idea that *Escuela de calor* is both equally seductive as it is foreboding. Thematically, the video could either be seen as incredibly misogynist or as a controversial statement about the treatment of women. I tend towards the former view, as the video seems to represent the actions of the band as mischievous and not necessarily as violent kidnappers. While Kaka de Luxe may have dabbled in lyrics about BDSM and other sexual deviance, all of it was of a consensual nature, playful, and vaudevillian. This music video, on the other hand, represents the problematic portrayal of women in the more mainstream culture of the time. While punk musicians have been known to dabble in violence towards women, recognition of the oppressed or marginalized groups of society (of which women form a part) is more important to the punk gesture.

The music video is disturbing and quite problematic upon review. Whether the intended message was one of condemning or condoning the abuse of women is lost in the obscurity of the subject. The video also carries a new implication for the image of the band whether it was

intended or not. Radio Futura would continue on to become significant symbols of the rock ethos, which is inherently masculine and macho. As will be seen in chapter 3, that symbolism of the virile rockstar persona, specifically embodied in Santiago Auserón, will become a major element of the band's popularity and marketability.

To conclude this chapter on Spain's punk movement, I wish to re-emphasize the fundamental divergence that occurred between the two bands that have been examined. Kaka de Luxe was a band that, in the grand scheme of things, was ephemeral. It was a band that set out to engage in anarchy as fun as Paul Begin explained, and accomplished just that. In that anarchy arose several distinct voices that musically evolved into various genres, most notably that of Alaska y los Pegamoides and the other various incarnations of Olvido Gara, Nacho Canut, and Carlos Berlanga. While they stuck closer to the rock and punk genre than Alaska ever did (by the time Alaska y Dinarama formed, Gara's musical direction was synth pop), Radio Futura quickly transformed themselves into a commercial outfit by removing elements of the punk gesture to appeal to a broader audience. There was historical precedence for the move, as Spain had only recently begun to test the limits of the constitutional right to freedom of expression. Other rock groups in Spain before Radio Futura aligned themselves with cultural, religious, and political ideologies to avoid confrontation with the Ministry of Information and Tourism. This often led to laughably inauthentic performances, even by bands that had gained serious notoriety like Los Bravos, El Dúo Dinámico, and Tequila. In other words, the rock gesture of the 1960s and early 1970s in Spain was contained by politics.

Unlike their predecessors in Spanish rock, Radio Futura's artistic decisions were dictated less by politics and more by an entertainment market. Rather than face a tribunal over questionable lyrics, a band's fate would easily rest upon the decisions made by record company

executives and the general public. Enrique Sierra highlighted this tension between artistic authenticity and consumer demand in an interview regarding the way in which the band was treated while under the Hispanovox label. Sierra paraphrased (perhaps with his own artistic liberty) the way executive José Luís Gil explained the band's predicament:

> Mira reinas, vosotras habéis firmado un contrato que, como sois muy jovencitos y no tenéis ni puta idea, no habéis leído la letra pequeña, pero este contrato os obliga de por vida. Entonces, o sacáis lo que queremos que saquéis, o no vais a volver a grabar en vuestra vida. (Iturriaga)

The sentiment that Gil transmitted regarding the band's prospects for future recordings mirrors the same draconian censorship imposed by MIT director Luis Carrero Blanco in the waning years of the Franco dictatorship: rigid, non-compromising, and unforgiving. Perhaps it is this level of consistent political conditioning and obedience to what authority figures say that influenced the decisions of bands like Radio Futura to abandon the punk project in favor of something that would fit within the national narrative. Not only did the band members have to sell themselves as a product, they also had to eat, and the hand that fed them was the record label.

In the next chapter, I will examine how this same divergence (maintaining the punk gesture vs. containing the punk gesture) happened in a very similar way. While Mexico may not have been as highly censored during the 1960s and 1970s as Spain, political and social suppressors still played an important role in the convergence of punk and popular music during the 1980s. What will be seen later on is how, despite abandoning the punk gesture, bands like Radio Futura helped pave the way for a new age in rock music in Spain and Latin America.

Chapter 2

Mexico, Punkeros, and Comrock

At first glance, punk and Mexico are two things that are seemingly incongruous: Mexico, like Spain, has been a historically conservative country. The national narrative of Mexico has been one of proletarian struggle, it is true, but carefully steeped in the official laity and institutionalization of the Catholic religion.. Since the end of the Mexican revolution in 1917, the country worked tirelessly to create a strong national identity and an even stronger political and economic hegemony through the ritualization and proliferation of post-revolutionary institutions like the national government and the Catholic church (Lomnitz 155). During the 1940s and 1950s, under the administrations of President Miguel Alemán and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Mexico solidified political control under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), nationalizing major industries such as oil and suppressing opposing political voices. Under the strict control of the PRI, the country experienced what was later termed the "Mexican miracle" because of the major economic turnaround that took place within the thirty years since the devastation of the revolution. Between 1940 and 1970, Mexico averaged a growth of about 6.4 percent annually, while nearly doubling in gross domestic product between 1950 and 1973 (Joseph 155-7). Because of this growth, a middle class began to take shape. In the process of becoming wealthier, these middle class communities wanted to consume in the same way that their neighbors to the north did in dress style, music, and entertainment–albeit on Mexican terms.

That meant that there was ambivalence towards US culture and consumption in general. Mexicans felt this ambivalence primarily because of the multiple instances in which the United States exercised imperialist policies and actions on its neighbors south of the border. Long lasting resentments regarding the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo where Mexico lost more than half of their land to the United States after the Mexican-American War underpinned this sentiment of ambivalence towards US culture. First they had come to take away their land, now they were coming to take away the essence of traditional Mexico. With rock music, the same line of reasoning applied. The introductory chapter to *Rockin' las Americas: the Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America* further expands on this:

> In short, it is quite understandable that the left in Latin America so closely identified rock with the United States and perceived it as a reflection, if not also an embodiment, of imperialism. As a result, the left was reluctant to recognize rock's progressive potential. At the same time, rock was also being attacked by right-wing conservative sectors of society, who abhorred the music because, to them, it signified the breakdown of traditional patriarchal institutions and values. Thus, rock found itself in an isolated position, literally caught between la espada y la pared (the sword and the wall)-the "sword" of ideological purity and the "wall" of the old order; or, in U.S. terms, and excusing the pun, between "a rock and a hard place." (Hernandez 6)

While rock may have carried with it a tinge of distasteful imperialism for Mexican society, it still had success in gathering fans and being a draw for Mexican youths. The only difference was that the rock gesture would have a harder time asserting itself in mainstream culture.

In the beginning years of rock in Mexico, most audiences heard rock for the first time through movies. While the United States produced thousands of films, music recordings, and

television programs during the 1940s and 1950s, Mexican film studios were developing their own golden age in cinema. Oftentimes these films were made in cooperation with film production studios in the United States, thus further cementing the transcultural exchange that would continue up to our modern day (Fein 158). Imitating trends in film and music in the United States seemed a logical step towards modernization, but it was riddled with difficulties. The comedia ranchera that had dominated the Mexican box office during the 1940s and 1950s experimented with new international musical genres beginning in the 1950s. Yet rock was not really viewed as a distinct musical genre with its own subculture. Rather, rock was a dance style or rhythm that could be played in nightclubs for the upper classes. In short, rock was not a youth movement initially within Mexico: it was, as Pierre Bourdieu would posit, a signifier of the cultural capital recently accrued by a burgeoning middle class wanting to evolve into a cosmopolitan, Western community.

Films like *Los chiflados del rocanrol* (1957) and *Locos peligrosos* (1957), while implementing some early rock and roll songs, stuck to the established filmic forms that had been popular for the past few decades. Apart from that, rocanrol was seen as a depreciative artform; such music easily led to a rupturing of what Eric Zolov describes as "buenas costumbres" (27). In other words, the rock gesture stood in stark contrast to what was expected of the youth of the nation. Just as in the United States there was an alarmist attitude towards the connection between rock music and juvenile delinquency, so too in Mexico was there a deep concern that rock, despite being in vogue, was seen as a threat both moralistically and as an imperialist artform from the colonial north. For example, a month before the release of *Los chiflados del rocanrol*, Elvis Presley purportedly stated that he would kiss five negro women before ever kissing a Mexican (Zolov 41). The outrage of many Mexicans was so strong that several political

figures called for the mass burning of Presley records and paraphernalia. After the incident, adverts for *Los chiflados del rocanrol* depicted a highly effeminized Elvis, inviting audiences to listen to the "reyes reales de rocanrol": Agustín Lara, Pedro Vargas, and Luis Aguilar (Zolov 43). This particular controversy highlighted the tension Mexico had about rock: on one hand, Mexican society wanted to consume modern styles in music and film; on the other hand, the national Mexican discourse did not want cultural colonialism. The film itself had little to do with rock and roll, opting for traditional ballads, charros, and mariachi numbers for their soundtrack rather than true rock.

Los chiflados del rocanrol demonstrates the Mexican ambivalence towards the rock gesture. The ambivalence would continue to fuel controversial discussions about the role of the rock genre well into the 1960s and even into the 1970s. The ambivalence towards rock youth culture would evolve quickly into antagonism, and by 1968 full police brutality. The government-induced massacre at Tlatelolco on October 2, 1968 (just ten days before the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics) began what was considered a "dirty war" instigated by the PRI to suppress political dissidence and nonconformity. This would continue well into the 1970s with the banning of *hoyos fonquis*, clandestine performance venues for artists to play music that would later become the proving grounds for punk in Mexico (Zolov 249).

For punk to come of age in a country that for more than sixty years had been imagining itself to be the southern counterpart of its northern neighbor, it had to face a major conservative hegemony. This was already problematized by punk's difficulty of identifying itself. As seen with Spain, bands from the late 1970s struggled to define what punk really was. It could not be partitioned into any particular category, as Beer explains in his sociological survey on the genre:

> One of the immediate problems that we are faced with in trying to define punk is that a key feature of the movement is its discomfort with labels, categories, and boundaries. As such, it is a movement that is hard to tie down to a clearly defined set of characteristics with discrete boundaries. (21)

The punk ethos, even in its early stages, was difficult to characterize. The one thing that does tie the punk communities together in Mexico is the hyper-focus on marginalization. Even though the spectrum of classes were represented in the early punk scene, much of the central focus was on the peripheries and being an outcast of society.

This chapter will focus on the rise of two influential post-punk bands in the Mexican soundscape: Size and Ritmo Peligroso. The previous chapter looked at the divergence between Kaka de Luxe and Radio Futura, as Kaka de Luxe dissolved into various other projects while Radio Futura went on to fashion itself as an international rock success. Size and Ritmo Peligroso had similar trajectories. Size split up into various other post-punk and synthwave projects while Ritmo Peligroso rebranded itself several times in order to become a major musical force in Mexico City during the mid-to-late 1980s.

The divergence that occured between these two Mexican bands again demonstrates the difficulty of integrating the punk gesture into the mainstream of a country that had struggled for years with the rock gesture as a whole. On one hand, early Mexican punk and post-punk sprung from a cosmopolitan middle class youth that bore little resemblance to their British or American counterparts–a situation that bore faint resemblances to the rock performed in upscale cabarets during the 1950s in Mexico City. On the other hand, punk's more visceral, anarchic philosophy was percieved as even more threatening to government and conservative society than previous iterations of counterculture. *Hoyos fonkis* in the mid 1970s gave way to the subterranean punk

scene in large part because of the underground's resentment of political and expressive repression during this time period (Pedelty 263).

Because of punk's foreign origin and its problematic resistance towards symbols of power and authority, early Mexican punk artists had to make aesthetic decisions similar to those made by artists in Spain: First, they either had to copy the punk gesture directly from their influences in the Anglophone world or to refurbish punk in a form that would be uniquely Mexican. Second, to either imagine the punk aesthetic as an insulated, exclusive genre or to re-imagine the punk subculture as a larger-scale, national product. Both decisions came with pitfalls. A "refrito" punk band could be seen as a pale imitation of their supposedly more authentic counterparts in the north and across the Atlantic. Bands that tried too hard to be American or English would be seen as self-loathing. Likewise, the Mexican punk movement might fizzle out if it were not able to maintain a strong enough commercial presence within the Mexican soundscape, and commercial presence could be maintained if bands were to follow the popular trends occurring in the North American and Latin American markets.

Transferring punk from one locality to another occurs in a myriad of ways because its subversive message resonates with youth across cultures. As Mark Pedelty in *Musical Ritual in Mexico City* says, "British punks, Japanese rockers, and Chilango rocanroleros share a sense of of collective alienation that is both a reaction against global capitalism and evidence of hits hegemonic success" (264). For Mexico, it came via two principal players: middle and upper class adolescents, and the radio. Well-to-do youth who were exposed to the music firsthand in places like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago could have easy access not just to records and paraphernalia, but to punk artists themselves. Illy Bleeding of Size often referred to his meeting with David Bowie when he lived in Toronto, and his subsequent masterclasses with mime artist

Lindsay Kemp.[11] Piro Pendas of Ritmo Peligroso studied briefly at the Dick Grove School of Music in Los Angeles.[12] Other aspiring Mexican artists found punk through visits to clubs and concerts in border towns and cities further north like Los Angeles. The Sex Pistols played most of their final gigs in towns with prominent Hispanic populations like San Antonio and San Francisco (Savage 451-63). These youths often traveled between the United States and Mexico, allowing for a porous exchange between communities that they frequented. In short, most early punk artists from Mexico started out in the same vein as Kaka de Luxe members: well-to-do youth that found particular styles abroad.

Punk also crossed the border via the radio. Most people in Mexico could not afford travel to the border, so the border travelled to them by airwaves. Mexican youths listened in on punk records by the Ramones, The Clash and the Sex Pistols through border blaster radio stations that were unregulated in their amplification by the US Federal Communications Commission. Some of the more notable of these were XEPRS-AM in Tijuana, XEG-AM in Monterrey (which was owned by an American), and XED-AM in Reynosa (which was the first "border blaster" as it was just outside of McAllen, Texas). Since these border blaster stations were trying to break into US market tastes, rock records played regularly on the ultra-powerful frequencies (Fowler 7-10). Mexican radio listeners heard punk music through the late 1970s at the height of the genre's popularity, thanks to the radio stations that blasted punk songs to both Mexican and US listeners. These two forms of transmitting punk to Mexico would start the first wave of punkeros in the country.

[11] The album cover of Size's EP shows Illy Bleeding dressed as a clown, possibly in homage to his former teacher Lindsay Kemp.

[12] Michael Jackson and Linda Ronstadt studied here during the physical school's short 18 year history.

Despite the initial inroads and demand for punk, there were some obstacles. The general Mexican population detested that type of music. Adults either ignored punk or imagined it to be a caricature of lowbrow, trashy lifestyles. Just as comedias rancheras made a caricature of the rock gesture back in the 1950s and early 1960s, punk was made a caricature by a rather awful film that was neither a comedia nor a ranchera. The Mexploitation film *Intrépidos punks,* directed by Francisco Guerrero, came out in 1980 to rather poor box office performance. The film centers around a punk biker gang led by a stripper named Fiera that terrorizes a small rural town. The film's treatment of the punk aesthetic is both unintentionally comical and wildly awful, as the women have hair that floods the camera frame with distinctly 1980s-style bouffants and bodysuits that allow for gratuitous male gazes. The men are fat, grungy forty-somethings with a penchant for hairy chests. The film centers on wanton violence, ruthlessness, sexuality, and a hatred for authority. This type of characterization left little to the imagination of Mexican moviegoers regarding what the punk aesthetic was, despite it being largely a farce on the post-apocalyptic tribalism films that were coming out at the time. Ironically, while the film's portrayal of punk is farcical, *Intrépidos punks* displays the punk gesture without fail: the disregard for society's rules on behavior is perhaps the most essential element of anarchy in punk, and therefore a cornerstone of the punk gesture.

Another major obstacle for punk in Mexico had to do with youth culture's yearning for authenticity. Punk as an artform is a proletarian pursuit, a message that supposedly resonates better when individuals are marginalized or are part of the working class. Just like the Spanish band Kaka de Luxe, Size and Ritmo Peligroso were comprised of rather well-educated, middle class kids. Both bands recorded songs in English.[13] both had a technical mastery of their

[13] In the early years of the band (1977-1980), Ritmo Peligroso carried the name "Dangerous Rhythm" to hopefully increase their chances of distribution in the United States.

instruments that indicated their background in musical education. Some of them had already been dipped into the avant garde and high art musical world of Mexico, such as Walter Schmidt and Carlos Robledo of Size. Punk coming from the high art world might appear to be a conflict of interest. These indicators could have easily marked them as unauthentic punks. They did not have the marginalized socioeconomic background that most people would associate with the underground music scene. The term *chavos fresa* became the byword for those who belonged to this particular grouping (Pam 157). They often lived in geographically well-to-do neighborhoods, went to good schools, but enjoyed the punk aesthetic regardless. Their connection to the punk scene was directly correlated to an imaginary worldwide community of youth, and their cosmopolitanism would stand out as a way to imagine themselves as part of the Anglo punk scene as well.

This anxiety of wanting to be part of a more cosmopolitan international community highlights the reason many of these youths were branded as *chavos fresa*. The term is pejorative by the standards of their socioeconomic counterparts, *chavos banda* (Feixa 157). These particular punks were not nearly as cosmopolitan, nor were they concerned so much with imagining themselves as part of the avant garde. In all reality, many of them were children of campesinos that had fallen on hard times economically and needed to move to the city for employment and better living prospects. This created an intergenerational clash between the those born in the *rancho grande* and their children who were born in the *ciudad grande*. As sociologist Laura Collin pointed out, many of these youths resorted to gangs and juvenile delinquency in part to adapt to the world they had been thrown into as a result of their parents' need for work:

> Ellos representan, en la mayoría de los casos, a la primera generación nacida en la urbe. Necesitan de conductas y comportamientos que los distingan y diferencien del tipo de vida que rechazan. La banda responde a las necesidades urbanas, habla su lenguaje moderno, agresivo, transnacionalizado: los separa del mundo localista, arcaico, tradicional, de sus padres. (Collin 215)

Chavos banda were loose gangs of juvenile delinquents that formed the bulwark of what one might call “authentic” punk style. Members of *chavos banda* were largely from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of urban cities such as Monterrey, Mexico City, and Guadalajara. The most notable *chavos banda* were a semi-organized gang called the Mierdas Punk (Shit Punks). This particular gang held territorial dominance in Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl, a sprawling dormitory city of about 3 to 4 million inhabitants near the Mexico City municipal sanitation facilities (Pam 158). Their lifestyle was in stark contrast to the *chavos fresa* that were weekend enthusiasts: many Mierdas Punks would spend the entirety of the week rummaging through the local dump, consuming drugs and alcohol, and engaging in the black markets of Ciudad Neza (sometimes affectionately called Neza York). While the *chavos fresa* would create their own clandestine gang of sorts called Punks Not Dead, upper and middle class punks were still mostly concerned with the distribution and consumption of the paraphernalia and not necessarily a lifestyle (Castro-Pozo 109).

Chavos banda, on the other hand, were the spiritual progeny of other well-known marginalized subcultures in Mexican society: the 1940s pachuco, the 1960s chavo de onda, and prison argots. Their form of speech was not directly informed by a cosmopolitanism like *chavos fresa*, but by the slang of chilango culture. Unlike their wealthier counterparts, their disadvantage in finding stable jobs and living in an area well-known for crime meant that being a punk was a

gesture against the systems that had put them there in the first place. The clothes many Mierdas Punks wore, for instance, were secondhand finds from the municipal dump close to Ciudad Neza or from the Tianguis del Chopo flea market that is held on Saturdays near the center of Mexico City (Feixa 159). The repurposing of their environment to fit their needs was an indicator of this resistance to maintain a hegemonic status quo: rather than go looking for better employment, Mierdas Punks would spend the day doing *cotorreo* (making fun) and looking for things in the dump.

Another example of how the punk gesture continued to influence *chavos banda* was the violence against forms of authority and society. In a short film titled *Sábado de mierda* by Gregorio Rocha and Sarah Minter, several members of the Bandas Mierda commandeer a dump truck in order to take a group of kids to an underground concert similar to the hoyos fonkis of the early 1970s where they dance to music in a mosh pit. In this simple and almost absurd act of rebellion, there lies a peculiar biopolitical meaning: the system that is supposedly working for these youth is not, therefore they must seize the means of their own liberation to reinvent the system–or do away with it altogether. Later in the film, a fight breaks out between rival gangs and the police become involved. After running scattered in dark and ambiguous shots the city, a police car is burned while a punk looks on with satisfaction. The message again here is clear: punks from Ciudad Neza demonstrate their aggressiveness through their actions, informed by the media that they consume and the work that they do.

The question of aggression is perhaps what drove the early punk scene in Mexico. Of the music generated from this period (1978-1980), much of the music centered around hard-hitting beats, vitriolic lyrics, and distorted, grating sounds. Aggression in this sense does not inherently imply violence toward Foucauldian systems of power such as the government or the police,

although such are the subjects at times. Rather, the anger expressed in Mexican punk music is a symptom of anxiousness felt by youth who were living in uncertain times. Aggressiveness does not inherently imply violence, but it does require adrenaline, something that pushes the body and the person through times of difficulty and stress. With both Size and Ritmo Peligroso, that paradigm of anger, hostility, and angst appeared to be the mainstay of their early years.

Size and the Early Punk Scene

Size was a band that fashioned themselves after the subterranean punk scene of the United States. Comprised of lead singer Jaime Keller ("Illy Bleeding"), synth player Walter Schmidt, ("Dennis Sanborns"), Carlos Robledo ("This Grace"), and Alfonso Moctezuma ("Dean Stylette"), their sound was defined by groups such as the New York Dolls from the early 1970s and their contemporaries, The Ramones. Illy Bleeding saw himself as the first "real" punk of Mexico. He claimed to personally know other more internationally recognized artists like David Bowie and The Clash while studying in Toronto in the mid 1970s. His connection to these more "authentic" punk artists probably influenced him to say that he was more "real" than other punks in that he had a closer association with the British punk scene. The formation of the band Size was not a result of best friends getting together and deciding to form a band. Most of the band members had been in other groups before Size, so their experience within the music scene in Mexico City was already rather extensive, having played in clandestine venues and more established, middle class venues like Hip 70 (Osorno 158). As Bleeding explains:

> Después yo convencí a Carlos Robledo (originalmente en Decibel con Schmidt) de formar Size. Size es una fusión del punk que yo traía con la música electrónica y los sintetizadores que le gustaba a *Charlie* (a Carlos). Así que hicimos una malgama

maravillosa con Walter Schmidt, Carlos Robledo, y yo en la voz, y Dean Styler que es un baterista que nos presenta Piro [Pendas] de Ritmo Peligroso. (Illy)

Their advent to the punk scene came with the release of their self-titled album in 1979. They originally were signed to the Polygram label, but their producer at the time decided against it and had them release the album through New Rocker Productions, a small recording label, in 1980.

The album has a unique, subterranean sound quality. The first song, "Tonight", is a short minute and seventeen seconds, with a four-chord progression and synthesizers that play a sharp melody over the gratingly nasal sound of Bleeding's vocals. The opening lines "I hate day and I hate night/but cloudy days are quite alright" give the listener the impression that Size's themes are gloomy. Yet in the process of creating a darker sound, the band's edginess shines through with an almost dance-like pulse beat, and the rest of the lyrics are almost too ridiculous to take seriously:

Get the disco idiots out of my sight
Cause I felt high and I don't wanna fight
And if you don't like oh what's in my life
I'm gonna kill your mother with my finger tonight.

Despite the oddities explained in this refrain that is sung twice in a row in a faux British accent, it strikes some excellent notes that are taken from the punk lexicon. The first line is a direct retort of the disco phenomenon that had been dominating the international music market between 1979 and 1980. Many music enthusiasts (especially punks) felt that such a genre was overly-produced in their sound, and lacking the necessary feeling for anything other than dance music. In short, the song takes aim at inauthentic music point blank. Moreover, the last two lines of the refrain do not mince words, as they offer a pseudo-sexual and violent retort for criticism, something that a

punk would do to assert themselves among a group. The fact that the song is not well-polished in its syntax is another signifier of the DIY punk ethos. And finally, because it is sung twice just to make the song longer than a minute demonstrates punk's rather common attribute of short and excessive bursts in song.

Other songs such as 'Bar Ship' and 'Strategy' from the same album share the same pulsing beat with synthesizers layered over the impossible-to-understand lyrics. Bleeding's interpretation of Johnny Rotten's half-sung-half-screamed vocals, combined with the grainy quality of the recording, makes what he says less important than how he sings it. Aesthetically it might be irritating to people who listen to the songs when they cannot understand what the singer says, but therein lies the beauty of it: a mental projection of what any of the words mean becomes the main value of listening to the song.

An aspect of Size's sound that separates it from other bands is the heavy use of synthesizers. As a commodity, synth keyboards at the time were extremely cost-prohibitive in Mexico. Aside from having nearly all the lyrics in English, the synth is a strong signifier of cultural capital which differentiates Size from regular punk music. To sound decent on a synth, one has to have at the least a basic mastery of piano and a rudimentary understanding of electronic wave patterns. On a song like 'Daily Matrix', where the lead synth is playing a highly complicated series of arpeggios and trills in tune with the main chord progression, it is obvious that Walter Schmidt and Carlos Robledo were no amateurs in their understanding of the instrument. This is far and beyond what Kaka de Luxe was able to accomplish in their first EP, despite them having keyboards in their recordings as well.

It should also be noted here that the lo-fi quality in the recording is another signifier of DIY punk. Like Kaka de Luxe in Spain, Size's sound was not necessarily defined by what type

of recording studio they used or what type of technology was available. Rather, the recording was an extension of their live sound. As stated in the previous chapter, the purpose of recording an album for a punk band has several purposes. Alan O'Connor explains that, "Punk is an activity or series of activities that take place in time," ("Labels" 1) meaning that recording and distribution of punk music is important, but far from being the sole purpose or end goal. Activities in the genre are not relegated to longevity nor commitment, as both characteristics are seen as a form of artistic shackling. Rather than become creatively stagnant or bound by obligation, punk activities are meant to be spontaneous and rule-breaking in order to maintain a higher level of creativity. Size's single album was a creative explosion, and that explosion might have been marred by a follow up album that did not contain as much enthusiasm or pep. O'Connor goes on to argue that although distribution for small punk record labels is highly limited and often does not yield high amounts of sales like large-scale operations, it galvanizes the community and establishes autonomy as an artist (16). That type of autonomy is a form of cultural capital.

The concept of cultural capital in Bourdieusian terms increases when making a record. The practice of entertainment for sale automatically establishes an artist with more cultural capital, regardless of where they may fall on the socioeconomic spectrum. While perhaps not as lucrative or as distinguished as producing a high-quality recording that sells millions of copies, placing a record in the hands of fans automatically puts a musical group in a class apart from the extensive community of casual musicians. Whether or not the band will ever release another album again is not the point: they have achieved the status of being a recorded band. And while they may have a record sitting on a shelf in a record store somewhere, that is not as important as

the concerts a band performs or the connections they make with their fan base. The record only serves as a signifier of their legitimacy (and cultural capital) within the punk community.

It is important to note that Size still had a commercial interest in producing the album. As stated before, several of the band members had been involved with the Mexico City underground scene for a period of time, specifically relating to underground music. As Walter Schmidt explained: "Nunca ha habido mucho *following* para la música experimental en México, entonces empezamos a hacer algo más.. pues no precisamente comercial pero sí más accesible que era como Punk/New Wave que hacíamos, también con cosas muy electrónicas y *ruiditos*" (Walter). The purpose of creating the band had as much to do with greater visibility as it did with creating new music.

This clash between wanting to become more commercial versus wanting to maintain authenticity strikes at the heart of what this thesis explores: that the commercialization of a radical art form runs the risk of neutering said art from having any real impact at all. As Mexico began to adopt more neoliberal market and economic strategies, the aforementioned model of producing only one album for commercial use was not sustainable. And in a market already dominated by transnational recording labels, the concept of being a live band was easily drowned out by the din of recorded music blasted through public address systems and radios across the country. Consequently, the dialectic for the Mexican punk community centered on that clash between authentic punk heritage and the selling out of groups that had previously been considered part of the collective. The histories of bands were rewritten to accommodate the uncomfortable reality that many of the punk community's idols were actually more commercial entities than marginalized working-class heroes, or that they were more middle class than working class. As sociologist Alan O'Connor explains:

> Political punks will make the connection between the Sex Pistols and the Situationists, but everybody rejects outright that they had a strong base in art schools. The connection to art school simply makes no sense in Mexico. The political statements of The Clash earn them a place in the Mexican history of punk, though they are also criticised for being on a major label and their subsequent rock star lifestyle. For some Mexican punks who prefer a more hardcore sound, the combat rock sound is also too marketable. ("Local Scenes" 231)

For a bands like Size and Ritmo Peligroso, the same dialectic applies. Both bands had members that came from middle class backgrounds, and Ritmo Peligroso went on to become more of a commercial rock outfit. Their success contrasts against Size's ephemerality, and as will be seen, reinvents the band entirely.

The "Dangerous Rhythm" of Ritmo Peligroso

Ritmo Peligroso and Size were contemporaries. The bands knew each other quite well, as lead singer Piro Pendas helped introduce Illy Bleeding to Dean Styler who became the drummer for Size. They played together in the clandestine *hoyos fonquis* that occurred around Mexico City throughout the latter part of the 1970s. It is no surprise then that the bands shared many similarities in the early stages of their existence. Piro Pendas, like Bleeding, had grown up outside of Mexico in California. He was well connected to the Chicano punk scene of Los Angeles at the time of Dangerous Rhythm's inception, knowing such prominent punk figures from that area such as Tito Larriva and The Plugz. The band underwent several personnel changes over the years, with Pendas being the constant of the band.

The band's first album, self-titled *Dangerous Rhythm*, was released in 1981 after having compiled multiple recordings over two years of off-and-on recording. The album's final product

is a near-forty minutes of post punk songs that were imitative of the popular trends from other musicians of the time, most notably those of The Clash, The Ramones, The Dead Kennedys, and the ever-present Sex Pistols. The album's opening track, "Up 'N Down", plays a fast-paced riff that shows off the technical skill of the guitarists. In contrast to a band like Kaka de Luxe, Dangerous Rhythm had performance presence. The songs from this album were expertly crafted, and carried a sound that rivaled that of any of their US or British contemporaries. The band was not concerned with experimentation. Unlike Size, their music did not use synthesizers or experimental chord progressions. *Dangerous Rhythm* was a straightforward punk album, and the band considered themselves "la primera banda de Punk Mexicano" (Rock 1). While that title may be as debatable as Illy Bleeding's claim to being the first Mexican punk, the self-identification with the first Mexican punk scene makes sense. Many of the songs on their first album contained all of the aesthetic qualities of traditional punk. For instance, "Social Germ" is a song with many of the same trappings that Size had: pulsating rhythm, politicized lyrics, and a rough quality to the recording. The lyrics "Social germ, I am a social germ/We are the only product of a decadent scum" hint slightly at the fact that the band comes from a more privileged position while emphasizing that they loathe the bourgeoisie. Pendas sung with a highly affected cockney accent on the songs that were in English.

Something that I did not previously analyze about the two bands is their use of the English language. This is deliberate, as Size almost exclusively sung in English with a few exceptions ("Diablo en el cuerpo"). Dangerous Rhythm, on the other hand, started out with mostly English lyrics and then transitioned into a completely Spanish-speaking band by the time *Rock en tu idioma* (1987) came around. In looking at this phenomenon of English lyrics, we encounter Bourdieu's *habitus* concept again. The speaking of a second language, specifically one

that has predominance in the economic market as well as the cultural market, carries with it a signifier of prestige and intelligence that both bands wanted to convey. Whether or not the purposes behind writing English lyrics were commercial is less compelling than the concept that the bands wanted to gain prestige. Prestige is different than commercial success, and in this case the prestige comes from cultural differentiation. Members from both bands came from a sector of Mexican society that could never pretend to be as socioeconomically disadvantaged as the *chavos banda* or the Mierdas Punks. Therefore, a marginalization of themselves as part of the upper strata of the socioeconomic ladder would put them into an area of both vulnerability and dominance: vulnerability in the sense that they were influenced by a higher strata of culture rather than low culture; dominance in the sense that because of their knowledge of the English language, they were able to artistically drive the punk scene in Mexico.

Dangerous Rhythm's departure from English songs highlights again the anxiety for commercial distribution while maintaining authenticity. In the late 1970s, to sing in English was a completely valid form of authentic musical production among the small bourgeoisie punk community that heralded the punk movement in Mexico. Oddly enough, however, the punk community in Spain did no such thing. Almost all of the punk bands from the transition period in Spain sung exclusively in Spanish, Catalan, or Euskadi–there was no desire to speak a foreign language aside from the one indigenous to the region. This had to do with limited English-speaking market access. Spain was closer to the UK, but it was far, far away from the US where most of the entertainment market for the English-speaking world existed. There was less pressure to mimic the styles and accents of Anglophone punk singers like John Lydon of the Sex Pistols or Mick Jones of The Clash. In a sense, Dangerous Rhythm's eponymous album from 1981 is linguistically schizophrenic, switching from one song in English to another song in Spanish. The

musical code-switching on the album happens between the first three songs: “Up N Down” sounds like the beginnings of a Ramones album, while “Indocumentado” squarely places the band in the Mexican context with themes relating to immigration and racial stereotyping in the United States. Near the end of the song, the lyrics of “indocumentado” sound more like a lamentation typical of a bolero or ranchero song, not a punk song:

> Tengo que aprender a hablar el inglés
> Pues no tengo a donde ir, no tengo a quién querer
> Me vine de ilegal, pero me ha ido muy mal
> Quisiera retachar a mi ciudad natal
> Aquí en este país extraño a mi familia y extraño a mi hogar

Unlike the bolero or ranchero song, “Indocumentado” points out the anxiety of English language learning for undocumented immigrants. Their need to find better work pushes them to learn the language, although the effort does not often produce better prospects. The song focuses on the central anxieties of many Mexicans in the post-Miracle era, where job security and community were at stake in the debate over whether to immigrate to the US or not. As a punk song, it highlights the marginalization of the Mexican as if they were a punk in the first place. The indocumentado does not fit in the wider community, just as the punkero does not fit within the greater Mexican narrative. Their status as an outsider mirrors the outsider nature of the punk. After “Indocumentado”, the album again makes an abrupt shift to “Guns in Ecstasy” where the subject revolves around gang violence and several thinly veiled euphemisms for sexual release when referring to the use of guns. All three songs have a very cohesive musical style to them, and their recordings are significantly better than those of Size.

What did not flow naturally for the band was thematic consistency. All of the aforementioned songs jumped up and down the scale of narrative, from a peppy opener to a somber reflection on the state of being an immigrant to a dark humor piece about gang violence. This was indicative again of how the band was trying to define themselves. They were attempting multiple routes of musical possibility all at the same time; perhaps to explore the depth of their musical journey or perhaps to record something and see if it would stick on the radio or sell in the record stores. As O'Connor stated regarding the fickle nature of punk recordings:

> Punk music does not stay still: styles evolve and change. Doing a record label is an activity that unfolds in time….decisions have to be taken that involve uncertainty. Will other people like this band? Will it sell enough copies to break even? Does it fit the label? This is one of the most difficult parts of the interview for record labels. They attempt to describe the bands they have released. (*Record Labels* 85)

This is where the anxiety of becoming conformist comes into play. For bands such as Ritmo Peligroso, categorization was a step towards becoming marketable.

Another important element of their evolution was their name change. Dangerous Rhythm maintained their English title until about 1984, when work for their next major album *En la mira* (1985) started. The fact that the band name did not change for a considerable period of time indicates that they were not about to give up on being a transnational punk band. Just like English lyrics were a way of both distinguishing themselves and marketing their music to Anglophone speakers, their band (or brand) name accomplished the same thing. But the struggle to maintain that distinction in a market like the United States which had already been inundated with punk bands meant that it was a pipe dream. The decision to rebrand themselves as Ritmo

Peligroso signified a shift in the musical direction of the band. As Pendas explained in a 2012 interview, “Con los años [ochenta] comenzó la necesidad de tener una identidad musical propia y comenzamos a experimentar con percusiones y ritmos afros, hasta llegar a tener el sonido que nos caracteriza” (Rock 1). This new musical identity signified a turning away from their post punk aesthetic and a turning towards musical hybridization.

By the mid 1980s, transnational recording companies such as BMG and Universal were eyeing new, independent labels in Mexico that were competing against established record labels such as Orfeón. Comrock, a recording label in the Mexican rock scene, had grown an impressive catalogue of artists in a matter of a few years. This was in part due to Comrock’s focus on signing bands quickly to record a few songs. As Guillermo Osorno explains in his book *Tengo que morir todas las noches*:

> Comrock era propiedad de Chela Braniff, la conductora de un programa de concursos de baile disco que a finales de los años setenta se transmitía por uno de los canales de mayor audiencia de Televisa, y de su esposo, Juan Navarro, un publicista español que entendió que había en la ciudad de México un fenómeno parecido al de la *movida* madrileña y quiso sacarle jugo…[Tomó] de la mano de la nueva generación de chicos punk de clase media, el mismo círculo de admiradores que rondaban a Piro Pendas, de Ritmo Peligroso, y a Illy Bleeding, de Size. (162)

In 1985, Comrock came out with their first compilation album, featuring bands such as Kenny and the Electrics (later to be rebranded as Kenny y los Eléctricos), Punto y Aparte, Mask, Los Clips, and Ritmo Peligroso. The concept behind a compilation like Comrock was simple: offer the public a sampling of various artists that they could listen to on their personal sound systems with high fidelity without having to buy a litany of albums that they may or may not like. At the

time, the concept was a sound business practice. It was easier to increase the sales of one highly successful album rather than have mediocre sales on several albums with overall higher production costs.

The album was a commercial success, and several of these bands benefitted from the increased exposure on a compilation set. The only big drawback of the album was the fact that it sounded nothing like the punk albums of the late 1970s, despite the fact that the aforementioned bands started out as punk rock outfits. Dangerous Rhythm came from the same generation of punk rock as Rebel'd, Size, and Masacre '68, but the overall sonic difference between 1979 Dangerous Rhythm and 1985 Ritmo Peligroso is almost as if they were never one in the same. The sound of Comrock is a clean, radio-friendly mix of Spanish and English lyrics, again underscoring the anxiety of influence these bands faced as they tried to make a transition into a pop-commercial sound. Their sound mirrored that of the British new wave artists of the time such as Duran Duran or The Police. The slickness of the production included heavy use of synthesizers and effects that pulled the sound of these bands away from the grungy and distortion-drenched outings that they had created only a few years before.

None of this is to say that the album is no good. To the contrary, the songs are of a high production value and are a worthwhile listen. Kenny and the Electrics have a fun single titled "Me quieres cotorrear" that sounds like a tongue-in-cheek parody of Cyndi Lauper. Punto y Aparte offer a single titled "Don't Cry for the Radio" that sounds like the perfect 1980s one hit wonder that would have ruled the US airwaves for a brief week or two in summer. All of the artists and recordings featured on the album are top quality. That perhaps is the tragedy of *Comrock*, as it is a marvellous album both for fans of rock and for casual listeners. Therefore, it became a death-knell for the first wave of punk rockers that had transitioned into new wave and

pop. *Comrock* ruptured with the sentiments of the imagined punk community in Mexico, taking elements of the punk ethos with it. In other words, the first truly successful national debut of punk artists outside of their early cloistered communities was a presentation with little remaining of the punk gesture.

Ritmo Peligroso offered two singles for the compilation: “Marielito” and “Dangerous Minds”. The song “Dangerous Minds” followed closer to the band’s style from the early 1980s. The song is in English and contains a straightforward rock beat. Because it did not deviate far from their previous aesthetic, “Dangerous Minds” does not stick out nearly as much as their other song. On the other hand, “Marielito” is a ska-infused salsa rock that sings of a rather innocuous encounter with a thief while on vacation. Unlike “Indocumentado” or “Guns in Ecstasy”, “Marielito” is laid back and unassuming in its groove. By the time the band recorded this song, Pendas had added a second drummer to perform on the bongos, congas, and timbales that infused Latin and Afro-Cuban beats with the overall rock sound. The fuzzy and gritty guitar is replaced by a sweetened, clean guitar sound. Pendas relaxed his voice to be jingly rather than abrasive, and his cockney accent disappeared completely at that point. And while previous punk trappings were abandoned in favor of something more mainstream, the band’s intuitive rock sensibilities still drove the sound. In all, the band felt more relaxed in the pace they chose for this single.

That relaxation came across in their follow up to the single that same year with the release of their fourth extended play titled *En la mira* (1985). The album somewhat mirrors the production quality of *Ley del desierto* by Radio Futura. Unlike the thematic schizophrenia of their first album where lyrics were jolting from English to Spanish, every song contains Spanish lyrics. Rather than being influenced by Anglo bands, Ritmo Peligroso feels comfortable with the

Latin-based rhythm driving the majority of the music. The high quality reverb and isolation of the instrumentation again points toward the slick production that the Comrock label was trying to establish in their compilation. Singles such as “La guerra acaba” and “Rock del 3er mundo” were instant classics in large part because they followed the same tropes as their contemporaries like Kenny and the Electrics. The themes were no longer drenched in dark sarcasm, pseudo-sexual violence, or angst about identity. Rather, the musical themes were geared towards a wide audience that felt more affirmative about Latino identity. “La guerra acaba” talks about the return of young soldiers from a war that has been lost. The theme, while somewhat brooding about the effect war has on the psyche of a nation, is broken by the irresistible sing-along chorus: “es el ‘a’ ‘a’ ‘a’ del afecto/es el ‘e’ ‘e’ ‘e’ del amor.” “Rock del 3er mundo”, a progressive song in its structure, underlines the anxieties of rock musicians coming from non-English countries while at the same time affirming the musical offerings that come from those regions as important and valid. The earworm that is “La guerra acaba”, combined with the newfound love for Latin beats helped catapult the band out of relative obscurity and into a broad national audience.

The jangly, clean guitars that undergird the harmonies of this particular album are also worth mentioning. This change in guitar tone highlights a significant shift in the way the band moved from punk to pop. The band’s distortion-filled guitars from their early days reflects an aspect of performance unique to punk. Sociologist Erik Hannerz points out that, “A successful performance not only relates to how well the performer attends to the cultural structure that render the performance meaningful; but for such a performance to stick, it has to also be fused with the audience’s conception of these structures as well” (29). In essence, punk performances focus on the energy of the moment, the *jouissance* of the experience. Distorted guitars help achieve that effect on a punk audience, in large part because it provides visceral response without

needing a great amount of technical practice on the guitar. In other words, virtuosity is not a hallmark of punk. From the previous chapter, one can make the argument that Kaka de Luxe's lack of virtuosity on guitars helped them attain a certain level of authenticity. The distorted sound of Ritmo Peligroso's first album did the same thing. Now, however, that distortion is gone, revealing a certain level of technical mastery on the instrument not seen before. This transforms the band's style into mainstream listening. Casual listeners do not generally wish to hear heavy distortion against fast and furious drums. A clean, harmonious sound from guitars garners a wider audience.

By the time *Comrock* came out in 1985, Size was no longer a band. Walter Schmidt and Carlos Robledo had left to work on their electronic synthwave band called Casino Shanghai. Illy Bleeding continued as a fixture of the punk scene throughout the years, performing with various bands in local areas around Mexico City until his death in 2010. However, Bleeding never achieved the same amount of commercial success as his contemporary, Piro Pendas. The necessity of preventing a band like Size from slipping into obscurity came as a creation of the mythology of punk in Mexico. This mythology started to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s with documentaries like *La escena punk en México* (1993) and films like *Nadie es inocente* (1988) by Sara Minter, along with regularly published magazines like *Sonido* and ephemeral fanzine publications[14]. The punk community stayed relatively localized to places such

[14] José Luis Paredes Pacho's book *Rock Mexicano* is instructive on the popularity and meaning of fanzines: "Los *fanzines* también reflejan la cantidad de grupos que hay en el país; sólo basta echar un vistazo a la cantidad de nombres de bandas que desfilan por sus páginas. Los *fanzines* son revistas austeras elaboradas con los medios y recursos más baratos, ingeniosos e inmediatos. Son expresión de gente afín a un género musical o de los grupos mismos y son un ejemplo de la vitalidad de la cultura que rodea al rock en México" (16). I find it interesting to note that while ephemeral, fanzines were clear indicators of a vibrant subcultural community that focused on their own respective interests. This phenomenon is not unlike blogging or web groups that post online about various topics apropos to the general group interest. *Fanzines* were perhaps the literary localities where the greatest amount of community building occurred for punks beyond that of the Tianguis del Chopo and the underground concert venues.

as Ciudad Neza and the Tianguis del Chopo, becoming an insulated subculture that, while it has not grown significantly since the 1980s, has maintained a certain level of homeostasis and self-sustainability. Punk artists to this day emerge from the Tianguis each weekend to perform and distribute their work.

At this point in the history of punk in Mexico, the punks that had made it into the national markets were ready to set the next stage of evolution for rock in both Mexico and in the international Hispanic community. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the precarious positions of punk bands like Ritmo Peligroso in the recording industry would help catapult Latino rock music towards the Spanish Rock Boom in the 1990s. It came, however, at the expense of the punk genre's gesture.

Chapter 3:

Neoliberalism, *Rock en tu idioma*, and the Spanish Rock Boom

The first two chapters of this thesis focused primarily on the production of punk in a national context. The reason for this was twofold: first, to interrogate the unique attributes of the various bands that emerged from that particular context; second, to demonstrate how the punk gesture was contained politically, either by suppression of the expressed gestures or by promoting the gesture as a political tool. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, however, political suppression of art and music became a less common practice, especially among western societies such as Spain and Mexico. Moreover, the national context from which bands such as Ritmo Peligroso and Radio Futura emerged from began to fade as the 1980s progressed. This was largely due to rapid international commercialization outside of their home countries. Ironically, this increase in foreign popularity equally contained the punk gesture, as the original elements of both bands were stripped down in favor of a broader musical appeal.

This chapter looks at how the neoliberal and global market of the 1980s helped pave the way for a massive resurgence of the rock genre in Latin America in the 1990s, while also looking at how the remnants of the punk gesture were essentially eliminated from the vocabulary of both Radio Futura and Ritmo Peligroso. However, the process of eliminating the punk gesture is not solely because of neoliberal market ideology; it is an effect of social processes that inform the market. This means that if attitudes regarding what is acceptable in popular music change, the punk gesture can reassert itself within music production and distribution. As will be seen near the

end of the chapter, the chaos of an open market allows for the gesture to return on occasion, leading to the Spanish Rock Boom of the 1990s.

The 1980s were a decade of economic growth around the world, in part because of the adoption of new capital trading strategies and deregulation. During the waning years of the Cold War, NATO countries like the United States, France, West Germany, and the United Kingdom experienced unparalleled growth in industry, trade, finance, and commerce. The United States, running an ideological war against the USSR, enacted sweeping tax reforms in 1981 and 1986 while also deregulating many industries, thereby heightening the impetus for international investment and trade among transnational corporations that now had extra cash flows. The subsequent lowering and eradication of trade tariffs between these countries quickened growth, and would ultimately give way to the ideology now known as neoliberalism. The basic concept of the ideology is that global market trends in production and consumption are manifestations of the best choices for the largest segments of the population. Moreover, neoliberalism derived itself from the classical liberalism of the 18th and 19th century which believed that market trends would self-regulate, rather than having government intervention in cases of trade (Steger 7-10). It is with this backdrop that neoliberalism began to inform the business practices of Spain and Latin America as well, since growth was a tempting fruit for countries that had been trying desperately to modernize to be more like their colonizers.

Both Spain and Mexico embarked in economic modernization projects throughout the early part of the twentieth century and beyond to varying levels of success. But the 1980s sharply reflected the accelerated pace by which both countries grew economically. Mexico in the late 1980s, under president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States, Canada, and Mexico in an effort to liberalize a

stagnant national market and give the country a needed economic recovery after the 1984 market crash (Simonett 121). The plan to bring needed capital investment to Mexico worked, as multiple U.S. manufacturing companies built factories in border towns to exploit cheaper labor and *maquiladoras*[15]. Similarly in Spain, planned urban spaces opened up their doors to banking and investment firms in the 1980s in a bid to gain greater international capital amongst European nations. For example, the AZCA commercial zone in Madrid became the home of Banco del Santander, Banco Bilbao Vizcaya, Telefónica, and Mapfre, all of which were major international companies with high investment holdings in Latin America (Masterson-Algar 179). There was a new focus on wealth accumulation as being a moral thing to do. Countries could settle disputes easier if they were motivated more by economics than by brute force.

The advent of new technologies that made communication, transportation, and production more effective and faster also played an integral part in the wholesale distribution of neoliberal ideology. In the case of the music industry, CD players, Walkman Stereos, and home entertainment systems gave rise to new forms of consumption. Most music previous to the 1980s had only one of two technologies: the radio or the record player. For most people, both technologies were bulky, cumbersome machines that one could only enjoy in the car or the home. With the mobilization of music listening with products like the Sony Walkman Stereo, that was no longer an issue. Equally as important was the durability of new listening formats. Vinyl records scratch and damage easily, but cassette tapes and CDs have greater durability and can be played many more times before wearing out. This, combined with the increasing accessibility of these products for personal and commercial use removed the cost-prohibitive barrier for

[15] The common term for cheap labor factories that proliferate on border towns like Tijuana, Mexicali, and Nogales. These factories are notorious for worker abuse.

consumers and artists alike, and consequently increased the sale and distribution of all sorts of music.

Neoliberal Punk?

Neoliberalism greatly affected the punk gesture. Previous chapters have hinted at these effects taking place. Neoliberal ideologies motivated bands to produce commercially accesible music. Radio Futura and Ritmo Peligroso were part of that move. They wanted to integrate into the growing commercial Latino music market. Many Latin American countries near the end of the 1980s saw an uptick in economic growth, and that meant a wider market of Hispanic consumers. Urbanization also contributed to the development of the booming Latino music market. More urbanites spent their weeknights at local bars and clubs where musicians performed. Concert venues like Rockotitlán in Mexico City or el Pentagrama in Madrid started to develop a more formal proving ground for new musicians than clandestine punk venues or *hoyos fonkis*.

By the end of the 1980s, the term punk had been subsumed by a new moniker: Rock urbano (González Moreno 75-84). Granted, this new name did not really change the punk gesture, as many of the musicians that came from this movement were just as committed to political criticism and rebellion as any punk musician from the past 15 years. As Obed González Moreno points out in his book *Poética de la calle*, artists like Rockdrigo González and Chava Flores wrote socially conscious material, albeit in musical styles that do not sound like punk. More importantly, these more socially aware musicians shared the space of rock urbano with bands that were far less concerned about politics: Caifanes, Kenny and the Electrics, and Ritmo Peligroso (78-9). This meant that previously exclusive social spaces for punks were now mixing with the mainstream. Rock urbano did not discriminate or delineate, meaning that it did not

repsect the previous politics of punk community identification. Rock urbano was as much a commercial entity as anything, further widening the gap between the more hardcore punks and the casual crowd of punk and rock enthusiasts. By consolidating the rock genres of Spain and Mexico, record labels broadened the market as wide as possible to accommodate the largest audience. Consumers determine market trends, and if consumers are not interested in punk's anarchichal gesture, then the gesture must be mitigated. Even aspects of the punk aesthetic are changed to conform more to a wide audience of consumers.

A good example of this broadening is Radio Futura's album *La canción de Juan Perro* (1987). The album virtually eliminated the last remaining elements of the band's aesthetic edginess to better market themselves outside of Spain. When Ariola records bankrolled Radio Futura's previous album *De un país en llamas* (1985), the album achieved commercial and critical success in Spain, but several of the songs were pointed critiques of Spanish society and religion (García-Purriños 1). The album's name connotes the chaos and difficulty the band felt in Spain. The best example of this comes from "El tonto Simón", which sings about Simón whose father was a revolutionary that burned down a church many years ago. Because of his father's evil act, Simón is ostracized from the community and seen as subhuman. This harsh critique of Catholic society would not translate well in places like Mexico where Catholicism still maintains a strong presence among the faithful. *De un país en llamas* worked as a successful album in Spain, but not quite as an international hit. Their next album had to be something universal, less political, and less controversial.

La canción de Juan Perro met those requirements. Rather than singing about existential dread, politics, or self-identification, Radio Futura switched gears in this album to appeal to their growing audience across the Atlantic. The highly disturbing and misogynistic narratives like the

music video for “Escuela de Calor” were replaced by art rock songs in *Juan Perro*. “Annabelle Lee” from that album demonstrates that edginess being curtailed. The song is a direct translation of Edgar Allan Poe’s poem of the same name and has a musical composition that is reminiscent of power ballads a la Michael Bolton. The music video gives a visual representation of the poem’s story, with a few surreal interpolations like two angels playing chess. While Poe’s poetic story has mystery and gothic romance elements, nothing in this reproduction of his poem has the punk gesture or the aesthetic. That is not to say that the album or this particular song is bad. To the contrary, *La canción de Juan Perro* gained massive success. It continues to be a perennial favorite for music critics. As recent as 2014, Rolling Stone Magazine placed the album as number four on the list of the fifty most important Spanish rock albums of all time (Stone 1). But the distance between their early punk roots and their commercial success through their new contract with Ariola records was drastic.

Another example of this neutering of the punk gesture can be found in Ritmo Peligroso as well. After the success of *En la mira* (1985) through the Comrock label, the band was busy for the next three years, touring and working out a new record deal with Polygram/Universal. In 1988, the band released their most popular album up to that date, self-titled *Ritmo Peligroso*, though not to be confused with their English-titled album of the same name. Their biggest hits from this album were “Contaminando” and “Déjala tranquila”. “Contaminando” demonstrates how far the band had evolved. It is a musical composition that sounds very similar to the style of Santana, complete with a Salsa beat, Afro-Cuban drum section, horn section, and a blisteringly virtuosic guitar solo. The song’s lyrics, while talking about the environment, do not carry the same brashness that the band’s previously political pieces have: “Estoy pensando en la vida viviendo nuestra realidad, y sé que juntos podremos hacer más bella esta ciudad.” Rather than a

sardonic critique of Mexican society calling for revolution or anarchy, "Contaminando" is a communitarian message that pleas for a cleaner, better Mexico City. The song caught the attention of DF officials who quickly used it in a citywide campaign against pollution (Rock 1). All of this reinforces the fact that Ritmo Peligroso was playing to their rock urbano audience, an audience that probably was not all that interested in the punk aesthetic or the punk gesture anymore. Politics were packaged in such a way as to be popular and appealing, and in the case of neoliberalism, something to be consumed.

The issue with the neoliberal pre-packaging of politics into safe, commodified entities is that it neutralizes any threat of controversy. It also removes the discomfort that comes from having the freedom to express opinions. Politics that center on issues like pollution often are simple, contained talking points with little substance, as seen in the lyrics of "Contaminando". Neil Nehring in his book *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism* states that the concept of neoliberalism eradicated any trace of counterculture's revolutionary power: "As numerous critics have pointed out, the failure of much of the counterculture lay in its easy equation of consumer freedom–the right to wear clothes and hair any way one wished, to consume drugs and music, and to have sex unimpeded–with political freedom, even revolution" (58). The behavior of consumption drives neoliberalism's market trends, and a significant part of those trends are informed by what has already been established by society as correct behavior.

This idea has its roots in what governments decide as correct behavior. In Mexico, the concept had the term "buenas costumbres." In Spain, Francoism wanted a return to the Golden Age of the Spanish Empire by instilling strong Catholic values. Both countries to this day still maintain a certain narrative about what an ideal citizen looks like. Oftentimes it has to do with religion or devotion to the goals of the revolution. The conditioning by government or political

power over decades (even centuries) leads to a neoliberal economy that follows those trends of consumption–at least in the beginning.

Neoliberal Punk!

Neoliberalism and government diverge at the controlling of behaviors. While government and society previously influenced the behaviors of the individual to conform, neoliberalism is not as concerned with behavior within a society as it is in exploiting those behaviors for monetary benefit. The only behavior with which neoliberalism ever concerns itself is consumption. That, combined with the advancements in travel and communication, makes for a potent cocktail that disrupts national identities and narratives that underpin the discourse of what it means to be a model Mexican or Spaniard. This increase in globalization leads to a dismantling of those previously dominant discourses and can create a new crisis that is neither countercultural nor marginal in nature. George Lipsitz eloquently defines this crisis in the introduction to his book *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*:

> The rapid movement across the globe of people, products, ideas, and images seems to undermine foundational certainties about the meaning of local and national identities, the value of personal and collective histories, and the solidity of social relationships and social networks. New forms of economic activity produce both astounding wealth and appalling poverty-sometimes in the same locations. New technologies liberate us from tiresome tasks yet create unprecedented environmental dangers. In some respects, global marketing brings the people of the world closer together than ever before, yet consuming the same products, enjoying the same products, or working for the same employers does not seem to make us any less divided, as old antagonisms and new enmities create violent conflicts on every continent. (3)

But despite this somewhat depressing view of neoliberal chaos, there is an inherent advantage that the neoliberal ideology offers the punk gesture. Market trends can be swayed in favor of the marginal or the peripheral. Punk's emergence from the London underground into the mainstream during the late 1970s and its continual reiteration in the mainstream stand as proof of that. The reason punk artists in Spain and Mexico existed in the first place was because the punk gesture resonated with a significant portion of youth. Later on, grunge music in the early 1990s became the spiritual successor to the late 1970s punk movement, creating wildly successful acts like Nirvana, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam. This is further indication that while market trends may often stick to non-controversial bands and artists, the punk gesture still can assert itself as it resonates generationally and geographically. The chaos that neoliberalism and globalism introduce is almost anarchic in its own way, providing opportunities for the punk gesture to manifest itself in new musical acts. The open market respects individual tastes in music by offering a wider variety to choose from. The chaos of market trends further solidifies an individual's preferences by allowing for competing capitalist interests. As long as that competition and possibility for inclusion are there, neoliberal markets can allow the peripheral and marginalized to enter the world spotlight in entertainment.

Compilation albums like *Rock en tu idioma* (1987) demonstrate this idea. When RCA Victor and Ariola México S.A. began compiling what would later become the *Rock en tu idioma* series, they wanted to showcase groups that had gained notoriety in their home countries but were previously unheard of elsewhere. The concept exploited the increasing market globalization of Latin America for the benefit of bands that previously could not gain exposure outside their home country. Both Radio Futura and Ritmo Peligroso were featured on these compilation albums: Radio Futura four times, and Ritmo Peligroso twice. The increased exposure for other

groups like Caifanes, Fobia, Maldita Vecindad, Soda Estereo, Mecano, and Nacha Pop also spurred significant gains for their own careers. Caifanes filmed one of the first *MTV Unplugged en Español* episodes in 1994 due to their significant commercial draw. Maldita Vecindad (another old-guard punk band that slowly morphed into commercial music) would sell out entire stadiums throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s. While *Rock en tu idioma* often selected the most pop-friendly choices of rock music, the compilation set's popularity helped narrow the gap between the rock diaspora of Latin America and a public that wanted to consume rock music in their language.

There are limits to neoliberalism's ability to democratize the process of consumption. Even for punk communities, the practice of consumption has limitations imposed upon group members. This is partly due to market availability, and partly due to standards of the community. When O'Connor conducted his sociological studies of Mexico City punks in the 1990s, he discovered that the range and quantity of punk paraphernalia varied due to lack of accessibility. Theoretically, punks had unprecedented access to their favorite records by the late 1980s because of the aforementioned increases in technology. But, as O'Connor states,

> In practice, a Mexican punk is much more likely to rely on what is available in the weekly El Chopo rock market or to get copies of cassettes from a friend. In the dialectic between individual tastes in music and what is easily available, there is a structuring structure: on the one hand, the social organization of musical tastes; and, on the other, the distribution channels for punk music ("Punk and Globalization" 179)

While nowadays the internet and rapid-delivery service help to narrow that gap even more, the inequality between accessibility to the punk scene in Mexico City and another place–say Los Angeles–still exists.

Another critique of neoliberalism's market-driven sales structure is the pigeonholing of Latin American rock artists into an ethnic subcategory of music. This partly comes from the cultural hegemony that the United States still has over the entertainment industry. In his introduction to *Postnational Musical Identities,* Alejandro Madrid points out that same issue, citing Simon Frith in the process:

> Frith explains that 'even the most nationalistic sounds–carefully cultivated folk songs, angry local dialect punk, preserved (for the tourist) traditional dance–are determined by a critique of international entertainment' and adds, 'no country in the world is unaffected by...the twentieth-century mass media.' (9)

This determination prevented Rock en Español from gaining greater notoriety among English speakers, as foreign language music in the United States tends to suffer from a perceived specific locality. US citizens are not interested in foreign music when there is already a plethora of major musical acts that sing in English. Listening to bands that have language and cultural barriers proves to be too daunting for the average US consumer, and for some smacks of pretentiousness. Moreover, Ignacio Corona points towards the subjugation of Latino rock as an indicator of Anglo attitudes towards Hispanic identity; that it is localized, codified, and easily packaged so as to avoid the messiness of the encounter:

> As migrant workers sell their physical labor across borders, they [Latino rock artists] sell the product of their intellectual or artistic labor in the same way. To that extent, they perform transnationalism. And yet, their cultural practice, which disregards political borders and conveys no particular desire for the nation-state, acquires prominence in the international market of cultural goods as enunciated from a site-specific position. ("La Avanzada Regia" 253)

The limits of accessibility within Mexican or Spanish markets and the limitations imposed on Rock en Español by US cultural hegemony prove to be hindrances for Mexican and Spanish punk. A breakthrough in Latino markets is possible for certain, but a broader appeal beyond the Spanish-speaking world still seems to be far away, even at this present time.

Punk Trek: The Next Generation

So far, this thesis has looked primarily at four bands that started all around the same time in 1977 or 1978. They are part of what Obed González Moreno describes as the first wave of "rock marginal" (76). These bands took their cues from the Anglo punk scene, imitating many aspects of their aesthetic and incorporating elements of the punk gesture into their performance. As the years went by, the bands either dissolved into other projects or reinvented themselves to either move away from those Anglo influences or to become mainstream. In the process, virtually all the bands removed the punk gesture and the punk aesthetic. This chapter has so far looked at how neoliberalism contributed to that decline while also hinting at the fact that there would be a resurgence given the nature of open markets. Eric Zolov, in his book *Refried Elvis*, ends his final chapter with a short reference to the Spanish rock boom that occurred in the 1990s. However, Zolov looks pessimistically at the cultural, political, and economical pressures that drove rock into the ground during the 1970s and 1980s in Mexico. What he misses is that counterculture has a cycle: periods of intense countercultural revolution occur just before a period of commercial popularity and the eventual decline of that movement. The process eventually starts back up again after a period of gestation. This is what happened with the early punk movement in Spain and Mexico. The bands looked at in this thesis went through a similar cycle starting in 1977 and ending in 1987 with the advent of *Rock en tu idioma*. Even though the

compilation set was commercially successful, there was little indication that either Radio Futura or Ritmo Peligroso had first started out as punk rock.

What *Rock en tu idioma* did, however, was expand commercially on the growing body of Rock en Español. Since heavy political censorship and cultural backlash no longer held as much sway in music production and consumption, the Spanish rock boom could take place. That set the stage for the next generation of Hispanic musicians to recover the punk gesture and develop a new aesthetic. This was especially true of the Mexican rock scene. The new rock bands from Mexico not only gained notoriety in the Latin American market but also in the US Latino market, making small inroads to Anglo-American popularity in the process. Café Tacuba and Molotov are principle examples of this next generation that still record albums and tour to this day. While there are other bands like Maná do not engage in controversial lyrics or performances in this generation, the wide variety of political and social discourse means that the restraints of previous generations have been curtailed. While freedom of expression is always a touchy subject even for the most liberal and progressive of nation-states, the fact that Spain and most of Latin America now enjoy a relatively high level of free speech indicates that containing counterculture or the punk gesture is no longer a goal of governments.

Another important element before ending this chapter is hybridization. All the bands in this thesis either went through an evolution of some kind or were too ephemeral to have one. Of the ones that underwent change, their evolution comprised a certain amount of return to national musical heritage. Ignacio Corona points this out in his article "The Politics of Language, Class, and Nation in Mexico's *Rock en español* Movement": "New rock groups, or older bands coming out of the underground, had the unprecedented challenge of making rock 'their own thing'" (96). Radio Futura borrowed from musical traditions across the Atlantic, but Ritmo Peligroso only

needed to borrow from their own home country. Their infusion of Afro-Cuban beats or more traditional music did take away from their punk aesthetic, but that did not necessarily mean a total removal of the punk gesture. As Carmelo Esterrich explains in his article regarding punk and the folkloric:

> What is happening is the appropriation of the Latin American musical tradition but not necessarily its destruction or disappearance. These groups adopt musical structures and themes from traditional and popular music to transform and renew these traditions. (33)

This appropriation of musical patrimony is not a bad thing. In my opinion, it reinforces a commitment to strong cultural identity and valorization of the Latinx self. No longer do Hispanic musicians have to loathe their roots to consider themselves legitimate punk artists–they can embrace it. A perfect example of this from the next generation of punks is Café Tacuba's "La ingrata" from their *Re* album (1994). The song, while containing misogynist and grating lyrics interpreted through the voice of Rubén Albarrán, is the equivalent of a punk homage to the corridos of the early twentieth century. Another example is that of Molotov's "Gimme tha Power" from their seminal album *¿Dónde jugarán las niñas?* (1997). The song's chord progression follows that of a traditional bolero, following in the steps of protest tunes that were popular during the 1960s and 1970s like Victor Jara's "Manifiesto" (1973). The exceptionally strong lyrics of resistance against corrupt politicians and bureaucrats are punctuated by epithets such as "fuck you, puto baboso," elements that demonstrate a clear punk gesture underneath a Hispanic aesthetic. The purpose of these and many other songs by the same artists and others is to codify the Mexican or Spanish experience into punk terms. Cultural hybridity creates new forms of expression that derive from previous iterations to form a synthesis between national identities and a post-national aesthetic like punk.

In conclusion, evolution and hybridization are results of a neoliberal global market. Granted, neoliberalism has the power to ignore the peripheral or marginal, and often does. Many casual commenters on social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook lament the loss of "real music" because all the music nowadays is supposedly fake or contains no meaning, or some other reductive argument. But that commentary has a hint of truth to it: most commercial music has less to do with meaningful artform and more to do with selling a commodity. For punk music, this strikes at the very heart of authenticity, and therefore is a pretext to shun any and all forms of the mainstream. Ironically enough, punk itself has been commodified on multiple occasions. There is little to indicate that any of that commodification will change in favor of the subcultural over the mainstream. But punk is not dead, nor will it die. It may fall out of popularity, or it may gain prominence once again like it did in the 1990s. Thought the aesthetic may change, the punk gesture resonates with disadvantaged or frustrated youth, and they will never be in short supply. In my opinion, the future of punk is bright, and as Radio Futura said nearly forty years ago, "El futuro ya está aquí."

Conclusion

Negative Spaces

This conclusion really is not a conclusion in the traditional sense. I essentially summed up the whole of the thesis in the previous chapter. Rather than spend time regurgitating the argument over again with the same conclusion, I want to point out some things that were not covered in the previous chapters and introduction. When Richard Hamilton worked on The Beatles' *White Album* (1968) cover and artwork, he explained to Paul McCartney the need for negative or blank space in between photos: "He took all of the photos in a great collage, and right at the end of it, he took white bits of paper and stuck them on too. I said, 'why are you doing that?' He said it was negative space. I asked, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "you can look through the poster, otherwise it's too dense'" (Paul) In that same regard, the punk world is a massive collage with vast amounts of histories and narratives that can create a literary din that can make any argument ultimately too dense to decipher.

The negative spaces in my thesis are perhaps the voluntary flaws, the unexplained narratives that cannot be shown so as to let the central argument flow better. There were a lot of things that I did not include in this thesis that probably should be here to give a greater depth of character to the punk movements that existed in Spain and Mexico. That is why I have decided to briefly touch on the things that I felt could not be included but that at least must have a mention.

Queer and Gender Theory

After reading sections of *Tengo que morir todas las noches* by Guillermo Osorno and *Quiero ser santa* by Fernando Paíno, I knew that my explanation of the Latinx and Spanish queer community would be insufficient for this project. Punk and queer identity are unfortunate twins, as both come from the social margins. Their spatial proximity made the two communities intertwine on multiple occasions. Pedro Almodóvar's first film *Pepi, Luci, Bom, y otras chicas del montón* (1980) is evidence of that line blurring. Queer and gender theory also are helpful tools to examine fringe artists like punks, but I ultimately elected not to take that path as it could easily get convoluted in questions about identity and marginalization. I wanted to look primarily at how punk got popularized, and that is a different perspective altogether.

I was also aware of there being no discussion on the feminine in punk music. While Kaka de Luxe did have Olvido Gara, it does not make up for the fact that the rest of the bands were made up of men. Many critics have pointed out rock music's inherent gender bias to be mainly a "boy's club", and that women are viewed more as objects and less as subjects. Even Olvido Gara's alter-ego Alaska became a sex symbol during the late 1980s as she diversified into pop. In Mexico, artists like Angélica Infante play up their sexuality as a way to appeal to the male fantasy. These examples are problematic, as there are plenty of women punk artists throughout the world that are not taken as seriously because they do not wish to objectify themselves. Tere Estrada's book, *Sirenas al ataque: historia de las rockeras mexicanas*, does a fantastic job examining the women of the Hispanic rock movement. In the future, this particular issue should receive at least a chapter, if not a book, on the subject of women in the punk music scene of Mexico and Spain.

Hardcore Punk and Metal

Most of this thesis looked primarily at how the mainstream appropriated the punk genre. The problem with examining popular punk like that is that little room can be left to talk about the underground punk scene. Hardcore punk is alive and well in Spain and Mexico. The subculture from which bands like Kaka de Luxe and Size emerged from still maintain their community boundaries to this day. They experience their own evolutions and paradigm shifts, albeit on a smaller scale. Newer acts also originate from these smaller punk communities to go on to greater mainstream success as well, which is why it can get difficult to talk about these smaller enclaves without mentioning the mainstream.

Metal also gets no treatment in this project. The connections between metal and punk are many, going all the way back to the pre-punk 1970s when hard rock bands like Black Sabbath felt that popular music had taken a turn towards bourgeois tastes instead of counterculture. The two genres are cousins, and both have informed the other in their styles (leather jackets, spikes, hair, etc.) and musicality over the decades. Grunge music from the early 1990s is the lovechild between punk and metal, crossing the boundaries of hard-hitting rhythms and anarchy themes. Thrash metal, grindcore, emo, and many other metal genres do the same thing, combining elements from both traditions to synthesize and remix their aesthetic into new creations. The multiplicity of genres that derive from punk and metal makes it difficult to map a clear, concise narrative.

Politics of the 1980s

The first two chapters delve deeply into the political and cultural climate from which punk emerged, but little discussion on public policy occurs after that. That was deliberate, since my third chapter wanted to examine the impact of late 20th century capitalism unimpeded by questions of political affairs. During the 1980s there were plenty of instances in which

governments created problems for the punk community, but more often they indicated a loss of control on the part of the government. For instance, the PRI continued to prosecute clandestine concert venues on the grounds of illegal substance abuse throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Eric Zolov's final chapters in *Refried Elvis* focus on this particular abuse of power. But these political gestures were more indicative of the PRI's waning power than an exercise of their strength. To this day, local and federal officers continue attempts at shutting down the Tianguis del Chopo market in Mexico City, oftentimes with violent results that push police officers out of the neighborhood. That pushback against an authority like the PRI means that the conditioning, censorship, and suppression that existed from the 1950s to the 1970s no longer sustains for long periods of time.

Final Thoughts

During this whole project, I found that the punk movements of the 1970s and 1980s were responses to serious troubles within countries like England and the United States. When the Sex Pistols released their album *Never Mind the Bollocks* in 1977, their song "God Save the Queen" was as much a diatribe against the prolific government spending for the jubilee year as an invective against the royal family. The economic recessions of the late 1970s did little to quell unrest regarding the future state of the middle and working classes.

We live in an equally unsettling time today, where economic uncertainty continues to be a concern even 10 years after the 2008 recession. People on both the left and right are concerned about government overreach, the rise of populism, and the erosion of the democratic process. For the Hispanic community, problems surrounding immigration and NAFTA continue to haunt individuals and their identity. Racism, xenophobia, prejudice, and an increase of anger and violence spew out left and right–a scenario that looks quite similar to the late 1970s.

What we can garner out of this is that there are silver linings. Cult cabaret punk artist Amanda Palmer was quoted as saying that the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency would "Make punk rock great again" (Harmon 1). Perhaps Palmer is not too far off the mark. The punk gesture is one that forces a complacent hegemony's hand by speaking out against abuses of power. That was what the Sex Pistols were doing when they released the album that launched the punk genre into the limelight. For Rock en Español, bands like Molotov and Café Tacuba continue to record songs that speak out against political issues of the moment. What will be interesting to see is what new artists will come from the Trump era of uncertainty. Who will be the new Kaka de Luxe, or Size, or Ritmo Peligroso? The future is bright. The future is now. El futuro ya está aquí.

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